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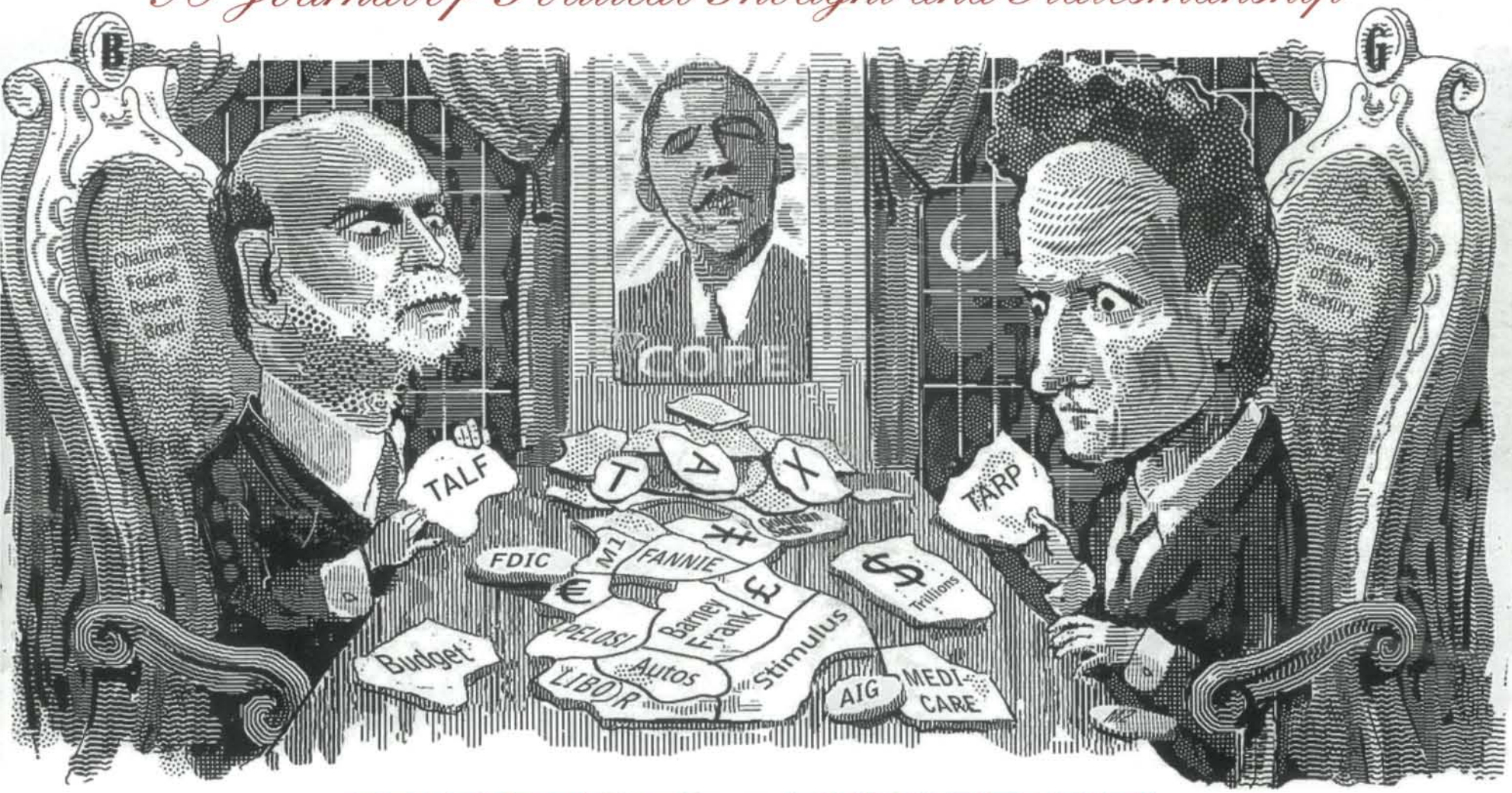

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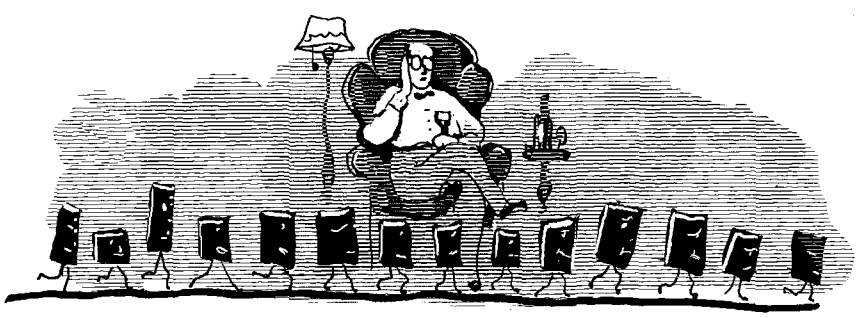

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The New New Deal

by Charles R. Kesler

If you believe President Barack Obama, he's working overtime to save American capitalism.

"I strongly believe in a free-market system," he told reporters in London, "and...in America, at least, people don't resent the rich; they want to be rich. And that's good." The market, he declared, "is the most effective mechanism for creating wealth...that history has ever known."

Unfortunately, it's no slouch at destroying wealth, either. Sometimes "it goes off the rail," he noted, and without some "thoughtful frameworks to channel the creative energy of the market...it can end up in a very bad place." Abroad and at home, Obama's pleas for "commonsense" economic reform sound almost sensible, especially in light of his reassuring statements that he is no friend of bigger government and doesn't support politicians' "micromanaging" business.

Yet it's indisputable that the president's recovery plans and proposed new programs would leave government permanently bigger, more costly, and more intrusive, which in turn would sap the foundations of personal freedom and responsibility. These facts have led Republicans to whisper, and conservatives on radio to shout, that the president is a socialist. If so, he is not a very honest or obliging one. Socialism used to mean public ownership of the means of production or at least of the major industries. That's always been a tough sell in America, and remains so. Accordingly, the Obama Administration is bending over backwards not to "nationalize" major banks or auto manufacturers, and refuses to recognize its ownership stakes in AIG, the auto companies, and other drooping businesses as anything but temporary.

Obama prefers to call himself progressive and pragmatic, terms that rule socialism neither in nor out and that recall his predecessor and model, Franklin D. Roosevelt. FDR wanted to save capitalism from itself, and he exploited so masterfully all the ambiguities in that objective that thoughtful people can be found, even today, who think he succeeded. They tend to forget that he changed not only capitalism but constitutionalism, and the latter unambiguously for the worse. They tend to overlook, too, that the relatively benign reform era they like to celebrate, the New Deal of public works projects and Social Security, is the New Deal stripped of its more corporatist, or to put it less kindly, fascist elements like the National Industrial Recovery Act. It was the unreformed Supreme Court's "horse-and-buggy" constitutionalism that saved the country from that ugly experiment, and thus allowed future generations to praise FDR's moderation.

Until the economic downturn got going in earnest last fall, however, Obama's mission was to save not capitalism but the welfare state. He trusted the market more than FDR did, because it had proved over many decades its ability to generate a surplus that could be redistributed to the poor (a relative term, of course), and because it had made many Democrats with educations and careers like his quite rich. But Obama realized that the entitlement state's spiraling costs would eventually prove unsustainable. Audaciously, he decided to double down: to declare health care a right and move toward universal coverage under an increasingly nationalized system. He bet that this will force higher taxes and, at the same time, give him and his successors greater control over costs.

In the meantime, we're supposed to get with the program. The satirical newspaper *The Onion* nicely captured this expectation in its headline not long after Obama's inauguration: "Nation Instinctively Forms Breadlines." To the Democrats it's always 1932. They think Americans should believe in a depression even when they don't see one. The paralysis of the financial markets and the plummet in stocks were real enough, to be sure, but Obama's agenda for nationalized health care, draconian environmental taxation and regulation, and the steady expansion of government (except for national defense) was already in place long before the economy tanked. It was in the Democratic Party platform, under H for Hope. Now it's marketed under F for Fear—without these urgent new initiatives, we are warned, the American economy will *never* recover.

The claim is absurd, but it gives you an idea of Obama's own underlying fear. If he wastes this crisis, his best chance of securing Big Government by making it bigger will have slipped away.

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Managing Editor: John B. Kienker
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CORRESPONDENCE

Environmentalism vs. Democracy

In his article "All the Leaves are Brown," Steven F. Hayward takes environmentalists to task for their doomsday scenarios and failure to see that free enterprise and global capitalism have improved the lives of most of the people on the planet (Winter 2008/09). He wants us to believe that if our ancestors had followed the logic of radical green theorists (who are really reds), we would still be hunters and gatherers, scratching out a meager existence. Environmentalists are full of self-loathing and have formed a new politically-correct anti-human religion, based around the eco-apocolypse and the need to redeem ourselves by doing everything good, God-fearing defenders of free enterprise hate. Well, some of that may be true, but it is not true of us.

We are criticized by Hayward, citing one quotation, on the grounds that in our book, *The Climate Change Challenge and the Failure of Democracy*, we make some favorable comments about China's authoritarian capacity to deal with environmental problems *potentially* better than liberal democracies can. The objection itself is far from clear, but we surmise that the core issue for a free enterprise mind is that we, like some other environmentalists, believe saving the planet is a value that overrides democracy and freedom.

The present state of the global economy, arguably the end result of free market capitalism, counts against the view that unrestrained market forces will always deliver the goods. It is the same unbridled freedom that has brought us to ecological collapse. Fortunately the 20th-century views expressed in Hayward's essay are now being superseded in the 21st century by those of a president who recognizes the connection and brings a green new deal as part of his reform agenda.

What in our opinion raises the most trouble for a libertarian position is how ultimate values are justified. Is Hayward really implying by his critique that freedom is more important than life itself? Is this a modern day version of "better dead than red?" If so it is absurd. No life, no freedom. Why should freedom be the ultimate value? Because it produces lots of money? Why should money then be the ultimate value? How do you stop the regress?

Actually, we agree with some aspects of the free-enterprise critique of environmentalism. Many environmentalists do have a religious mission and are motivated by leftist values rather than by science. Thus, the majority of environmentalists are silent on immigration issues because of political correctness and the desire to be ideologically pure. But some neoliberals favor big populations because this means more business, and are at one with the politically correct Left on this issue.

For libertarians it seems that the market and money are God. Their eschatology focuses upon those "satanic" forces that would compromise economic growth and technological development. Traditionally, Christianity recognized human limits because of original sin. Ecological considerations imply limits, so isn't this why free enterprisers are so hostile to environmentalism? They don't see limits because, as secular humanists, they see themselves as God.

We need to move on from the divisive 20th-century thinking expressed in this essay. Twenty-first century thinking and writing needs to include the words "positive," "co-operation," "inclusion," "discipline," and "vision," with new ideas as to how humanity can move forward.

David Shearman
Joseph Wayne Smith
University of Adelaide
Adelaide
Australia

One can only describe this so-called essay as a diatribe. Its commissioning would appear to stem from an empathy with those who challenge the increasing consensus of expert opinion about the significance of climate change. Consider the partial language its author uses in contrasting the reflections of "*intelligent dissenters*" with his citing "that the public isn't jumping on the *band wagon* despite a multi-million dollar marketing campaign and full-scale media *hysteria*" and "some cracks starting to appear in their [the Greens'] *dreary and repetitive storly line*" (my italics).

Mr. Hayward argues that pessimism has frequently featured in prognostications about the future; that all too often, that mood proved unjustified; and that therefore we should not be panicked into abandoning the pursuit of economic growth—a change of direction we would subsequently regret.

In his overview of nine books on the environment, he reveals a disturbing, wanton failure to understand the science on this *and* its implications. Recent analysis of the change in the planet's health has revealed inescapable evidence of an accelerating decline toward the demise of life on earth. The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased since 1750 to a level not experienced on the planet for nearly a million years, and looks to be uncontrollable. It is now possible to sail to the North Pole in the summer. One wonders what would persuade Mr. Hayward to desist from treating the subject in his inexcusably dismissive and light-hearted manner.

Though including my book among those "discussed," he reveals that, at best, he has only read it cursorily. He makes just one indirect reference to it, taken from an exchange I had in a radio interview on its themes. In this, I warned that we are heading toward a situation in which we will have the choice either of government taking draconian steps to avert ecological disaster or of sticking firmly to the democratic *diktat* that such steps are only acceptable if the majority of the electorate agrees. It is the imminence of our being faced with this dilemma that prompted me to allude to the prospect of that horrendous choice as an inevitable outcome of our current failure to address the issue of climate change adequately.

Indeed, I think that illustration of the genuineness of *his* democratic principles can be deduced from the fact that he calls me to task for "openly" advocating rationing. Are your readers to assume that he does not subscribe to the democratic proposition that everyone has an equal right to the planet's *finite* capacity to absorb further greenhouse gas emissions if the climate is not to be gravely destabilized—or does he think it is not finite?

The near-dismissal of concerns about the pursuit of individualism and its replacement with "soft despotism" implies the questionable belief that people have an inalienable right to do what suits them best with little regard to the wider consequences for society at large and, most disturbingly, for the generations following ours. It is all too obvious that the primary role of politicians is to intervene when the exercise of that right diminishes fundamental freedoms. The problem is that this role is not be-

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ing properly fulfilled. This is most apparent with regard to climate change. It is very clear our survival depends on carbon-intensive lifestyles having no future. This must be seen as a shared responsibility.

Dr. Mayer Hillman
Policy Studies Institute
London
United Kingdom

Steven F. Hayward replies:

David Shearman and Joseph Wayne Smith are quarrelling with an argument I did not make and a viewpoint I do not have (where in my essay did I declare for libertarianism?) while disavowing none of my central criticism that they are indifferent to democracy and individual liberty—and indeed are inclined to authoritarianism when they prove unable to persuade the public to support their proposed strictures. Some leading environmentalists openly admit this. Paul Ehrlich, to his credit, has long endorsed "coercion" without qualification or euphemism, and has proposed national and international institutions of immense economic power that would be intentionally isolated from popular political control. Yet he is seldom if ever disavowed by environmentalists. Old-fashioned liberals are justified in their suspicion of anyone who can admire, even in passing, China's authoritarianism.

Environmentalists usually argue against what they call "false choices" (i.e., that economic growth and environmental protection are incompatible), yet Shearman and Smith insist upon a categorical tradeoff between liberty and life itself, which false choice ironically reinforces my point. Fine: I'm willing to accept that but would, along with most Americans, insist on Patrick Henry's ringing reply.

This becomes important when placed against the backdrop of what can only be called environmentalist monomania on the subject of climate change. Though my essay was concerned with neither the science nor the policy of climate change, Mayer Hillman can't help recycling, like a medieval cleric, the procrustean argument from authority about so-called climate denial and retreat: the "consensus" of science. Along the way he lets fly this howler: "It is now possible to sail to the North Pole in the summer." No, it isn't; not even close. There's this stuff called *scientific data* on the question: ask the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Illinois. Who's ignoring science now?

I mention this particular point because it raises a larger issue. Even if one accepts the "consensus" of bureaucratic science (i.e., the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC]), science says "what is," not what to do about it or how to do it. All three correspondents presume that drastic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions are the only course to deal with climate change. One doesn't need to be a climate skeptic to question this, as my discussion of Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger in the essay suggests. (The silence of all three correspondents here about Nordhaus and Shellenberger is telling, by the way.) The modest first steps to near-term GHG reductions are already faltering; Shearman and Smith's reference to Barack Obama bringing "a green new deal as part of his reform agenda" will surely prove to be one of the more embarrassing sentences they've written by the time this year is out—cap and trade won't even come to a vote in Congress. Meanwhile, a few mainstream climate scientists in the IPCC (Tom Wigley in particular comes to mind) are arguing that we need to investigate alternatives to emissions reductions such as "geoengineering" (manipulating the solar radiation balance through various means that would change the earth's reflectivity of sunlight). Yet most of the leading climate campaigners oppose basic research into the question. When NASA proposed holding a two-day workshop on geoengineering a few years ago, it generated shouting matches in the hallways at NASA headquarters. This is not science—this is ideology at work.

Winston Churchill once remarked that a fanatic is someone who can't change his mind and won't change the subject, and the fanaticism of the extreme climate campaigners such as Shearman, Smith, and Hillman is reason enough for liberal-minded people to be wary of accepting either their scientific representations or their solutions. They miss my essay's main point and that of much of my other work on this subject: only an environmentalism that is compatible with human liberty and democratic institutions will prove sustainable (to use the favorite green term) over time.

Civil Rights and the Constitution

In "Civil Rights and the Conservative Soul" (Winter 2008/09), responding to William Voegeli's "Civil Rights and the Conservative Movement" (Summer 2008), Hadley Arkes writes that "the constitutional ground for the Civil Rights Acts is still a puzzle in our law"—meaning that the Commerce Clause "is immanently implausible as the ground for...penetrating past traditional barriers to strike at racial discrimination in private settings." Plainly, Arkes argues that the 1964 Civil Rights Act has no visible means of constitutional support.

Voegeli's reply to Arkes deflects his criticism by taking the word "puzzle" literally. Thus undaunted, Voegeli insists on the substance of his argument, namely that modern conservatives had better get on board the idea that the government can do pretty much what it thinks necessary to right great wrongs, with the caveat that some way should be found to limit "the reach of federal power." What way, one might ask? A Constitution? He tells us that objecting to casting it aside for a noble purpose was ignoble.

Indeed the heart of his argument is that conservatives in the 1950s and '60s—preeminently William F. Buckley, Jr.—hid racist sentiments behind constitutional arguments. We cannot know whether Voegeli would have pulled the race card on a Buckley famously able to defend himself. (In any case, it was in bad taste for the *CRB* to shove the race card into Buckely's fresh grave.) More importantly, Voegeli's deflection of Arkes's subtlety leaves the central issue insufficiently clear.

In 1964, both Buckley and Barry Goldwater opposed the Civil Rights Act on constitutional grounds. While I cannot vouch for their sincerity, I vouch for my own at that time, and now. In the early '60s no one took seriously the proposition that the Constitution empowered the federal government to outlaw racial discrimination by private parties. But many were swept along by the argument that stretching the Commerce Clause to empower the government to do just that would be only a little thing, and for such a good cause! I was impressed, on the contrary, by the contrast between law and arbitrary power, and had read enough history to recall that tyranny often begins with beneficences. Lincoln said that whoever has the power to turn slaves into free men has the power to turn free men into slaves. It seemed to me, then, that constitutional virginity differed little from the other kind. Give it up once, even for a good cause, and it is gone. The next cause is sure to seem even more compelling, until self-indulgent habit overwhelms the very notion of restraint. Forty-five years later, this seems even truer.

In the Civil Rights Act, Congress and the president found—and the public accepted—that the power to regulate who must provide services to whom exists in the Commerce Clause or at least in some indefinable emanation thereof. It should have surprised no one that ambitious people would rush to conjure up out of the Constitution and laws powers unwritten and previously unimagined. In 1973 Justice Harry Blackmun conjured an unlimited right to abortion out of an emanation of the penumbra of the 4th Amendment. He might just as easily have found it elsewhere. If anyone were to ask by what power

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the Obama Administration proposes to require health care providers, regardless of personal or religious objections, to take part in the delivery of abortion, latter-day legal alchemy would concoct it easily enough by commingling the rights that emanate from the 4th Amendment's penumbra, which we imagine mandates abortion, and the Commerce Clause's penumbra, which we imagine prohibits persons who offer public services from "discriminating." But no one even bothers any longer to gin up transparent excuses for doing what they want. If Mr. Voegeli had asked by what legal right the U.S. government takes over the auto industry, hires and fires its executives, nationalizes banks, requires the use of certain fuels and penalizes the use of others, declares carbon dioxide a pollutant, and considers taxing the methane exhausted by bovine (and why not human?) digestive systems, he surely would be "puzzled." I am not puzzled, and doubt that Arkes is.

Angelo M. Codevilla
Plymouth, CA

William Voegeli replies:

Angelo Codevilla hints gently that he does not share my concerns and conclusions about conservatism's record on civil rights issues. For *CRB* readers who are not *CRB* archivists, let me summarize the thesis of a long article: the conservative position on civil rights during the decade after *National Review* was founded in 1955 derived from the conservative project to re-establish limited government. This overarching goal, conservatives argued, could not be reconciled with any federal measures proposed at the time to end or circumscribe racial discrimination.

The spectrum of conservative opinion about race relations ranged from the belief that Jim Crow was deeply distressing and odious, to the position that it was the least problematic response to America's racial tensions. Some conservatives staked out one consistent spot on this spectrum, while others availed themselves of most of the existing bandwidth. Whether they considered Jim Crow profoundly or trivially bad, however, almost all conservatives from those years opposed federal civil rights legislation as a cure worse than the disease. All William Buckley could say in 1961 to blacks who wondered how and when their second-class citizenship would end was that "some problems are insoluble."

Buckley's position in 1961 is, essentially, Codevilla's in 2009. The latter calls ending racial discrimination a "noble cause," but says that the federal government's disdain for the constitutional impediments to advancing that cause is directly responsible for every subsequent domestic policy outrage. For my failure to join him in applauding the civil rights position Buckley and Barry Goldwater took 50 years ago, Codevilla accuses me of giving aid and comfort to the enemies—some wicked, some stupid—of limited government.

One problem with Codevilla's argument is that I repudiated Buckley's 1961 position four years after Buckley repudiated it, when he said, "I once believed we could evolve our way up from Jim Crow. I was wrong: federal intervention was necessary." Buckley's retraction is as unambiguous as it is slight. Codevilla faults me, and the *CRB*, for challenging Buckley's contemporaneous assessment of the civil rights movement only after he was dead. Actually, he had been challenged on it long before, mostly by liberals and memorably by Michael Kinsley in an e-mail exchange reprinted in *Slate*, an exchange I mentioned in my article. Neither the *CRB* nor I thought that conservatives should cede this discussion, and this part of Buckley's legacy, to liberals.

Codevilla's carpet-bombing rhetoric obscures the one aspect of his argument that is carefully drawn. He confines himself to disputing the federal government's constitutional authority to "outlaw racial discrimination by private parties." Few conservatives were so scrupulous 50 years ago, when it counted. The argument most frequently employed at the time was that the federal government had no legitimate role to play in outlawing racial discrimination by private *or public* entities. Consequently, they maintained, there was nothing to be done about dual school systems; ordinances mandating segregated beaches, pools, drinking fountains, restrooms, and buses; or the systematic denial of the franchise to blacks throughout the South. These depredations would end when their perpetrators wanted them to end, and not before.

The conservative constitutionalists of half-a-century ago used special reading glasses that rendered the 14th and 15th Amendments invisible. Those who present themselves as defenders of the Constitution are most credible when defending all of it, not just those portions they find useful. The two amendments are germane because, as Randy Barnett argued in the *CRB*'s Fall 2008 correspondence section, they justify "federal enforcement of civil rights, while denying a plenary power in the federal government to do whatever it pleases."

My own preference would be to follow the distinction Codevilla suggests: get the federal government out of the business of regulating contractual agreements between individuals, but uphold its power to defend citizens from discriminatory actions by state and local governments. If constitutional scholars such as Arkes and Barnett have a different approach to repudiating both racial discrimination and unlimited government, I would study it very carefully. Where to draw the line between the constitutional enforcement by the federal government of the rights guaranteed by the 14th and 15th Amendments, and the unconstitutional exercise of federal power that Barnett rejects and Codevilla derides, is a challenge. (Perhaps even a puzzle.) But the arguments about where to draw that line do not justify concluding that the guarantee of equal protection and voting rights is such a slippery slope that two of the Constitution's amendments should be ignored lest the entirety be wrecked.

Bureaucrats' University

Carnes Lord accurately describes ("...And We're Here to Help You," Winter 2008/09) many of the reasons why in American government today, "civil servants are neither"—to borrow Churchill's quip. But there is something circular in Lord's endorsement of a government-run service academy for bureaucrats, a civilian counterpart to West Point. It's sadly true, as he says, that having lost its grip on such fundamentals as citizenship and patriotism, "the private educational sector in the United States is no longer capable of preparing students adequately for public service." So why should we expect that a new national university, drawing from the same brackish intellectual well, could do any better?

Looking into the well-organized movement for a U.S. Public Service Academy, any conservative would be chilled at the assumptions its promoters hold and the company they keep. Hillary Clinton was a prime sponsor of their legislation while in the Senate. Democratic governors Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania and Bill Richardson of New Mexico were headlined as endorsers in their latest newsletter. I can't share Professor Lord's hope that "Obama...may move out smartly on this...idea." His administration could only make mischief with it, guided as they are by the belief that whatever government does is intrinsically good, and usually superior to what's done outside government.

Unless and until America's decadent elites, rightly skewered by Lord, rediscover a constitutional ethos that respects liberty and limited government, the USPSA concept is a nonstarter. Trying to advance that rediscovery through tax-funded shortcuts will only make matters worse. Transnational progressives scornful of the American Founding are already in oversupply.

John Andrews
Colorado Christian University
Lakewood, CO

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Carnes Lord replies:

I take John Andrews's point concerning the likelihood that a U.S. Public Service Academy would not be all that conservatives would want it to be. Indeed, that likelihood is probably greater now than when I wrote my review, given the nascent Obama Administration's leftward lurch and the new Democratic Congress's lack of interest in bipartisan solutions. So perhaps the political moment for this experiment hasn't yet arrived, if it ever will. I would simply note that the USPSA "movement" as such includes a considerable number of respectable citizens. It is not clear to me that it would be sensible for conservatives or Republicans to write off this idea given the avenues that will be open to them to influence its direction should it become a reality in the future.

Health Care Rights

In his essay, "Is Health Care a Right?" Andrew Busch overstates his case by claiming that "[t]here is no evidence that [the founders] considered health care necessary for realizing natural rights," and that with the "rare example" of guaranteed legal counsel, the founders' natural-rights understanding did not suggest any entitlement to any "positive government-funded service" (Winter 2008/09).

There is significant evidence, starting with Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, that in the founders' view the government's duty of protection included not only the securing of person and property against interpersonal harms but also the provision of the necessities of life to the truly poor.

Still, as Busch suggests, the governmental health care and other positive rights that contemporary liberals have in mind are much more extensive than the austere maintenance that the founders believed was the duty of state or local, and not the federal, government.

David R. Upham
University of Dallas
Irving, TX

Andrew E. Busch replies:

Professor Upham is quite right to draw attention to the fact that, at the time of the founding, Americans had a vigorous locally-based system of provision for the poor depending on a combination of private and public measures. In his *Notes*, Jefferson described in some detail Virginia's system, which depended on an assessment levied on "tytheable persons" by the vestrymen of each parish, to pay for opening private homes to those unable to provide for themselves, and, in extreme cases, for public workhouses. Needless to say, this system was far removed both in spirit and practice from modern-day advocates' preference for the "right" to welfare. For his part, Jefferson touts this system for its practical effectiveness and moral good, but is noticeably reluctant to suggest the poor had a natural right to it. Instead, he refers to aid as a matter of charity.

As Upham makes clear, we agree that the American Founders did not believe in government provision of health care and welfare as natural rights, or as a federal responsibility, in the same way these are conceived by modern liberals.

The Founders' Politics

I read with interest and pleasure James Hankins's review of my book *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic*, and I am grateful that he took time to wrestle with that work ("Republic of Devils," Winter 2008/09). In most respects, he does a fine job of situating my argument, and he rightly highlights the areas where I break with the scholarly consensus—regarding, for example, Machiavelli's attitude concerning Roman religion, Lucretius' atheism, the covert infidelity of the Averroists, and the import of Averroism and Epicureanism for Machiavelli and early modernity more generally.

Hankins is also right to see my book in part as an attempt to chart the origins of what Jonathan Israel has dubbed the Radical Enlightenment. There is, however, one point where he errs. I do not regard the American Founders as Machiavellians—although I do think that the species of republican theorizing that began with Machiavelli and that was developed by Marchamont Nedham, Thomas Hobbes, James Harrington, and others thereafter had a profound impact on their thinking.

Let me clarify what I mean in saying this. I am not, strictly speaking, a political theorist. The focus of my work has always been political practice. If the account in my new book is correct, philosophers in the early modern period made a concerted attempt to shunt aside the Christian religion and make philosophy central to political life. In doing so, they articulated a critique of both ancient theory and ancient practice and instituted a new way of thinking about republican politics, and I would argue (as I believe Leo Strauss would) that one cannot fully understand modern practice if one does not attend to modern theory.

This new way of thinking influenced the American Founders, but ancient theory and practice retained a certain hold on their thinking, too. The doctrine of the separation of powers as it is defended in *The Federalist* is an attempt to find a middle path between the spirit embodied in ancient republican practice and the critique of that practice embodied in modern political theory. Put simply, although there is a sharp break between ancient and modern republican theory, the break between ancient and modern republican practice is not and cannot be as sharp. The reason for this is that, insofar as modern republican statesmanship constitutes an attempt at establishing and sustaining self-government, it is unavoidably political in precisely the sense that ancient republican statesmanship was.

This can be put in another way. Machiavelli's rejection of classical republicanism was, at its heart, antipolitical. It reduced to a mere struggle for power what had always been understood as an ongoing contest arising from principled disputes concerning what Aristotle called the advantageous, the just, and the good. The political science underpinning the statesmanship of the American Founders made considerable concessions to modern political theory, but it deliberately left space (albeit circumscribed space) for what the ancient Greeks understood as *politics*—i.e, for public deliberation concerning the advantageous, the just, and the good. For Americans, the legacy left by the English republican experiment was exceedingly complex.

Paul A. Rahe
Hillsdale College
Hillsdale, MI

Correction: In Barry Latzer's essay, "The Great Black Hope," in our Winter 2008/09 issue, the data presented in Table B is for "White Males, 14–24" and "Black Males, 14–24."

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THE WILDERNESS YEARS BEGIN

Essay by William Voegeli

AMERICAN CONSERVATISM, ACCORDING TO John Judis, has "slipped back into the chaos and impotence that prevailed" before *National Review* was launched in 1955. Judis, a careful though not neutral observer of all things conservative, reported in the *New Republic*, "Conservatives' repudiation of Bush is part of their own self-denial. By pretending that he is entirely separate from them, they can delude themselves" that his unpopularity is not theirs.

Conservatives at the dawn of the Obamerican Century may be comforted to learn that Judis wrote this obituary in *1992*, one Bush presidency and half an election-cycle before Republicans won congressional majorities that would last for 12 years. Lexis-Nexis is pitiless to writers who confidently explain how yesterday's election will shape the next decade's politics. Barry Goldwater "has wrecked his party for a long time to come," James Reston assured his *New York Times* readers in November 1964, before that wrecked party won 5 of the next 6 presidential elections. Perhaps, then, the reports of conservatism's death are as greatly exaggerated as the ones about Mark Twain's.

On the other hand, Twain did eventually die. A political movement is not mortal in the same way as a man, but "everything that had a beginning must have an end," according to David Frum. A month after the 2008 election he reflected on William Rusher's *The Rise of the Right* (1984) in an online essay:

> While political conservatism is founded upon deep and enduring truths, political conservatism itself is a political movement that arose in response to certain conditions and that must fade with those conditions. In the end, political conservatism's core insights will cease to belong to any one political party, and be integrated into the shared history of the American people, part of the historical background from which new politics and new coalitions will arise.

The feeling that the lamps are being turned out is not unique to this election cycle. Liberals contemplated the prospect of a long internal exile after 1972, 1984, and 2004. Conservatives did the same after 1964, 1976, and 1992. A subsequent election or two proved many of these fears to be overwrought. It's always tempting to mistake what's vivid for what's important, to say "this time it's different" about the many transitory, non-defining elections that turn out to be not all that different.

Again, however, the fact that historic importance is wrongly ascribed to most elections does not prove it cannot be rightly ascribed to some. Perhaps 2008 *was* different, and conservatives' forebodings about when or whether they'll govern again are well-founded.

Muddling Through

MANY REPUBLICANS ARE NOW SAYING what the Outs always say after a bad election: how do we get back In? (The conservative movement is distinct from the Republican Party, but for the imaginable future there is no feasible way for the movement to succeed while the party fails.) Their argument is the mirror image of the one Democrats conducted throughout the Reagan era: do we need to adhere faithfully to our party's orthodoxy, and overcome voters' misgivings about it (and us) by advocating our central goals more passionately? Or do we need to accept that the voters are never going to embrace some of those goals, and alter or abandon them?

In confronting this choice, Democrats mostly muddled through. The party's commitment to gun control is quieter and less insistent than it was 30 years ago. Democrats have learned to speak sternly about crime, and respectfully about the military. Most congressional Democrats voted against the 1996 welfare reform bill, but a Democratic president signed it. For 12 years, Democrats seemed to accept that abolishing Aid to Families With Dependent Children meant that the government had negotiated a new deal between taxpayers and the poor that was more successful and equitable. Upon gaining simultaneous control of the House, Senate, and White House for the first time since 1994, however, the Democrats of 2009 waited all of four weeks before eviscerating the 1996 law in the fine print of the stimulus package.

Abortion was never so ambiguous. The party tolerates pro-life Democrats like Senator Robert Casey of Pennsylvania in states and districts that would be inhospitable to a pro-choice alternative. Such Democrats are made to understand, however, that they cannot change the party platform's unqualified commitment to *Roe v. Wade* (1973), cast any judicial confirmation votes that might increase the possibility of *Roe* being overturned, or even daydream about a spot on the national ticket.

On the broadest domestic policy question, the era of Big Government being over is over. (Conservatives can draw some equivocal solace from knowing that the era of Big Government being over never really got started.) By the end of 1997, the first year of his second term, Bill Clinton was on the verge of embracing entitlement reforms that would have moved Social Security and Medicare in the direction of solvency and privatization, according to historian Steven Gillon's new book, *The Pact*. Some prominent Democratic senators, including Bob Kerrey,

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John Breaux, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, were prepared to govern along the same lines. After the Monica Lewinsky story broke in January 1998, Clinton's aspirations shrank from building a history-book legacy to serving out his elected term. He was left dependent on the good will of ideologically implacable Democrats, who quickly scuttled any consideration of private accounts, reduced benefits, or means testing. There the matter has rested ever since.

Traditionalists vs. Reformers

For conservatives, the coming argument about core principles will pit "Traditionalists" against "Reformers," according to David Brooks of the *New York Times*. Traditionalists, he says, "believe that conservatives have lost elections because they have strayed from the true creed. George W. Bush was a big-government type who betrayed conservatism. John McCain was a Republican moderate, and his defeat discredits the moderate wing." The Traditionalists, Brooks says, include Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform. They're convinced the cure for the problems of conservatism is more conservatism: "Cut government, cut taxes, restrict immigration. Rally behind Sarah Palin."

Reformers, by contrast, believing that "American voters will not support a party whose main idea is slashing government," recommend "new policies to address inequality and middle-class economic anxiety." They "tend to take global warming seriously," according to Brooks, not only on the merits, but in the belief that conservatives "cannot continue to insult the sensibilities of the educated class and the entire East and West Coasts." The most prominent Reformers are writers. Brooks's list includes: David Frum, author of *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again*; Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, co-authors of *Grand New Party*; Ramesh Ponnuru of *National Review*; and Yuval Levin of the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

The Traditionalist-Reformer boundary line is not clearly marked. Not only do Reformers disagree with one another on many questions, but their differences push some closer to and some farther from the Traditionalists. Frum, for example, urges conservatives to take obesity seriously as a public health problem. Ponnuru doubts that "a citizen's weight is any of his government's business," since the conclusion of that argument would mean "there is no principled reason to reject compulsory calisthenics." He chides Frum for leaving behind not just the "conservative consensus," but "conservative habits of mind." Frum, conceding that all the policy options for obesity may turn out to be worse than the problem, insists on the broader point: "[W]e cannot allow ourselves to be scared away from creative thinking about new problems by ideological policemen." Even if it is true that conservatism rules out any ambitious policy measures to reduce obesity, Frum recently remarked, that tells us more about the limits of conservatism than the unimportance of obesity.

Reaching a Majority

Both traditionalists and reformers confront the Outs' essential problem in a two-party democracy: how do we get back to 50.1%? Part of addressing the question involves choosing between a half-full or half-empty interpretation of the most recent election. The Republicans' half-full explanation is that winning 46% of the presidential vote in 2008 was not bad, all things considered. Those things included the unpopularity of a Republican president whose second term comprised 208 bad weeks, Senator McCain's strained relations with his party's conservative base, Barack Obama's funding advantages and forensic skills, and the credit crisis and market crash seven weeks before Election Day.

A party that garners 46% of the vote under such dire circumstances could, conceivably, win a majority under ordinary ones. The half-full explanation is especially appealing to Traditionalists: if conservatism has so much residual support, then it doesn't need to be re-thought, just presented more confidently and effectively to an America that remains "a center-right nation," according to post-election analyses by Karl Rove, *National Review*'s Rich Lowry, and others.

Ronald Brownstein of the *National Journal* laid out the most bracing half-empty interpretation of 2008. He divides the American electorate into six demographic groups: 1) whites who have not graduated from a four-year college; 2) whites who have; 3) blacks; 4) Hispanics; 5) Asians; and 6) other minorities. By Brownstein's arithmetic, McCain would have won a 50.2-to-47.9 victory over Obama—*if* the electorate in 2008 had been apportioned among those six groups exactly as it was in 1992. McCain did best among whites without college degrees, getting 58% of their vote. In 1992 such voters accounted for 53% of the electorate, but were only 39% by 2008. Whites with college degrees were 35% of the total electorate in 2008, as they had been in 1992. Obama got 47% of their votes. The smaller proportion of working-class white voters corresponded to the larger proportion of minority voters. Blacks went from 8% of the electorate in 1992 to 13% in 2008; Hispanics from 2% to 9%; and Asians and other minorities from 2% to 5%.

Unless America's demographic future veers off the path it has followed the past 16 years, the Republicans' prospects will worsen from daunting to hopeless. Brownstein applies the 2008 election results for his six groups to the electorate demographers expect in the year 2020. The increasing proportion of non-white voters turns the Republicans' 7-point deficit in 2008 into a 14-point landslide defeat.

The problem, which looms larger in the Reformers' minds than the Traditionalists', is how to effect a *net* addition in the number of voters for America's more conservative party. Winning new votes is not rocket science. Winning new votes without losing old votes can be.

George Bush and John McCain, looking at the same demographic trends as Brownstein, concluded after 2000 that the GOP could not be viable without being electorally competitive among the growing cohort of Hispanic voters. That was plausible, as was their decision to make immigration reform a big part of the Republican sales pitch to Hispanics. There was no place in their equations, however, for determined opposition to more immigration from the GOP base, especially white voters without college degrees, the ones most likely to be competing with Mexican immigrants for jobs at restaurants, factories, and construction sites. Confronted with a rebellion by the party's core voters, Bush and McCain reluctantly let the immigration issue drop in 2007 after it became clear that any congressional majority for their proposal would be overwhelmingly Democratic.

"There will not be an Hispanic future for the GOP for years and years," Frum wrote in a newspaper column the day after the election. "American Hispanics are poor—and they vote majority Democrat for the same reasons that poor people of all races vote Democratic." Obama got 67% of their votes, despite McCain's ardent courtship. Black voters have been beyond the GOP's reach for almost half a century. Barack Obama received 95% of their votes, according to Brownstein. Asians and other minorities? Too small a portion of the electorate to bail Republicans out—and they gave 62% and 66% of their votes, respectively, to Obama in 2008.

New Votes or Core Votes?

For the foreseeable future, then, Republicans will have to get more votes from whites. The question is whether the party's best bet is to grow wider or deeper. Frum thinks the GOP *has* to do better with college graduates. "College-educated Americans have come to believe that their money is safe with Democrats—but that their values are under threat from Republicans," he says. Reassuring them will require saying some different things, about issues that include abortion and the environment, and saying some things differently. Frum wants a GOP that is "less overtly religious, less negligent with policy, and less polarizing on social issues." Michael Barone agrees that Republicans can and must do better with upscale voters, an effort that will require, among other things,

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"downplaying cultural issues." For example, he says, "the days of winning votes by opposing [same-sex marriage] are nearing an end."

Douthat and Salam think the GOP should concentrate on doing even better with its core voters, whom they call "Sam's Club Republicans." (The subtitle of *Grand New Party* is *How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream.*) Douthat and Salam are, nevertheless, Reformers rather than Traditionalists. They think Republicans must approach working-class voters with tangible benefits, not just cultural solidarity and anti-government populism. Douthat urges Republicans to talk to those voters "about the famous 'kitchen table' issues—public education and transportation, crime and health care costs—and [try] to expand the definition of what it means to be 'pro-family' without abandoning the GOP's core pro-life convictions."

To that end, Douthat and Salam endorse Ramesh Ponnuru's proposal to: a) increase the tax credit for each dependent child from $1,000 to $5,000; and b) make the credit especially valuable to working-class families by letting taxpayers use it to offset income *and* payroll taxes. The Ponnuru plan is revenue-neutral; its tax cuts equal its tax increases, which include ending the federal deduction for state and local taxes. It is, then, explicitly redistributive; his plan "would create winners and losers," Ponnuru says. The losers would be more prosperous taxpayers, especially those who never started or have finished raising families.

Douthat and Salam endorse similar policies to help working-class families with health insurance, as well as wage subsidies that would "help less-educated single men with low-paying jobs make ends meet, thereby making them more desirable marriage partners." The objective is to make conservatism attractive to a working-class larger than the cohort of those without college degrees. As Douthat argued in his *Atlantic Monthly* blog, many alumni of Youngstown State will have more in common with graduates of community colleges and technical institutes than with members of the "mass upper class" who spent four years at Amherst on their way to Wharton.

> I think building a coalition of social conservatives and social moderates from the middle of the income and education distribution makes much more political sense than trying to hold together a coalition of social conservatives from the middle of the distribution and social liberals from the upper end. Joe the Plumber and Joe the Office-Park Employee make *much* more plausible political bedfellows than Joe the Plumber and Joseph the Hedge Fund Guy.

The Reformers disagree on the new conservative agenda, and the makeup of the coalition it will galvanize, but agree that the Traditionalists, prepared to wait for the spontaneous political revival of Conservatism 1.0, are in denial. 1980 was a long time ago, say Douthat and Salam. "Every Republican wants to be Ronald Reagan running against tax-and-spend Jimmy Carter, but Jimmy Carter has long since left the building." As a result, Republicans "are losing the argument over taxes and spending."

1972 was even longer ago, Frum points out in *Comeback*. "Republicans have been reprising Nixon's 1972 campaign against McGovern for a third of a century. As the excesses of the 1960s have dwindled into history, however, the 1972 campaign has worked less and less well." He asks, "How many more elections can conservatives win by campaigning against Abbie Hoffman and Bobby Seale?" The time warp isn't helpful. "If we conservatives and Republicans want to win again," says Frum, "we have to offer the American voter something fresh and compelling—answers to the problems of today, not the problems of the era when disco ruled."

The Reformers want the Traditionalists to face some hard truths and make some hard choices. After the disastrous elections of 2006 and 2008, that advice is manifestly superior to sanctioning complacency.

Conviction Politics

But it's advice the Reformers need to take as well as give. In the Reformers' books, articles, and blogs, good government always turns out to be good politics, and vice versa. Conservatism 2.0 can win elections while steadily making America more prosperous, just, and free.

Ponnuru and Frum disagree about abortion, for example. Ponnuru thinks retreating from the GOP's pro-life stance will offend more voters than it attracts, while Frum thinks refusing to modify the party's position on abortion will alienate larger and retain smaller numbers of voters over time. Leaving aside the question of which one is right, it's noteworthy that each is confident that his preferred policy outcome is also the sound, vote-maximizing political tactic. Reformers, who find wise governance corresponding so closely to smart politics, would do well to extend some patience to Traditionalists, who struggle to reconcile them.

Conservatives, the defenders of American capitalism, have welcomed the application of business techniques and terminology to national politics. Google "Republican brand," for example, and your laptop will melt. Business is amoral in a way politics must not be, however. In business, if the price of corn is high we plant corn, and if wheat is high we plant wheat. If both are low and stay there, we sell the farm and write Game Boy software.

By contrast, as Margaret Thatcher said and showed, the only politicians deserving admiration are "conviction politicians." Successful, compelling, and shrewd ones like Thatcher and Reagan seize their historical moments to render their convictions more popular and politically consequential than they were before. Such leaders and moments are rare, however, and cannot be summoned just because a movement bound together by a cluster of convictions needs them.

While waiting for the next exceptional leader who can secure majorities for their convictions, conservatives—both Reformers and Traditionalists—must understand their situation without illusions. If the world is as congenial as the Reformers hope, doing the right thing will regularly resolve into doing the popular thing. Each additional wise and just policy proposal will make the conservative coalition that much bigger and more durable.

If it turns out that the tensions between governing wisely and winning elections are more formidable, then the Traditionalists' inclinations deserve some respect. Their strategy for future conservative victories is, indeed, hopeful rather than plausible. But among the causes of that disconnect is something more admirable than sloth, cowardice, dogmatism, or denial.

The Art of Compromise

The Traditionalists' reluctance to embrace the Reformers' fresh and compelling ideas, or offer some of their own, reflects an inherently conservative disposition to resist the Zeitgeist rather than accede to it. Politics is the art of compromise, and prudence may well dictate that conservatism should compromise with realities it cannot change and forces it cannot defeat. But compromising includes knowing when *not* to compromise, knowing which differences cannot be decently split. As political scientist Martin Diamond wrote, men may prefer to "go down fighting" rather than settle for a "morally disgusting" compromise.

Thus, conservatives who contemplate the smoldering wreckage after the 2008 election and say, "This time is different," may be right. Conservatives don't just have to devise a strategy to gain a majority, as they did in 1965, 1977, and 1993. They have to wonder, based on the entire record of the past 28 years, whether there is anything particularly conservative they'll be able to *do* if they secure that majority.

Conservatives disagree about what, exactly, they exist *to* conserve. University of Virginia politics professor James Ceaser has identified four different "foundations" for American conservatism: 1) Traditionalism, in the sense it was used by Russell Kirk to extol Edmund Burke;

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2) Libertarianism, and its assurance that "spontaneous order" will emerge from uncoerced human action; 3) Natural Right, the belief that human reason can ascertain universally valid principles of human conduct, such as the Declaration of Independence's self-evident truths; and 4) Faith, the desire to resist the forces of secularization and vindicate the role of religion in shaping American culture.

Proponents of each foundation have argued with the others' advocates for decades, sometimes esoterically, sometimes belligerently, occasionally in both ways at the same time. Despite their differences, the four foundations share an implicit premise: the conservative's mission is to champion to his contemporaries a heritage with roots that are centuries old. If, however, the relationship between those contemporaries and that heritage has become attenuated to the point of estrangement, then the heritage will be regarded as an exotic or anachronistic option instead of a vital but neglected part of the existing order. The "conservative" would then be reaching back beyond a historical rupture, and no longer trying to conserve but to recreate or refound, an endeavor that is even more difficult and less promising.

In "My Cold War," a famous—to some, infamous—article in 1993, Irving Kristol wrote:

> There is no "after the Cold War" for me. So far from having ended, my cold war has increased in intensity, as sector after sector of American life has been ruthlessly corrupted by the liberal ethos. It is an ethos that aims simultaneously at political and social collectivism on the one hand, and moral anarchy on the other. It cannot win, but it can make us all losers. We have, I do believe, reached a critical turning point in the history of the American democracy. Now that the other "Cold War" is over, the real cold war has begun.

A year later, William Kristol encouraged conservatives to embrace "a politics of liberty and a sociology of virtue" in order to wage the war his father had declared. Conservatives can point to impressive accomplishments over the past decade-and-a-half, none greater than the dramatic decline in crime rates, a problem most liberals and some conservatives considered insoluble in the early 1990s. The dark night of collectivism and moral anarchy has not descended.

It was clear even before the 2008 election, however, that the liberal ethos, by any reckoning, is more robust than it was in 1993. One measure of its strength is that conservatism's policy victories often engender conservatives' political defeats. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 paved the way for Bill Clinton's election in 1992, in the same way that the success of the surge in Iraq in 2007 took the war off the front page in 2008, and made it impossible for John McCain to gain electoral traction as its chief advocate. The tax reduction and simplification achieved by the tax reforms of 1986 cleared the canvas for liberals to immediately begin advocating new increases and complexities. Even as the memory of the great crime wave from 1960 through 1994 has been effaced by the expectation of safe streets over the past 15 years, liberal activists and writers are laying the groundwork for a campaign against America's "scandalously" high incarceration rates. Their "logic" is that safe streets have rendered full prisons unnecessary—rather than full prisons having rendered safe streets possible.

Conservatism or Victory?

In short, America's political division of labor finds conservatives cleaning up liberals' messes, and liberals sweeping into the newly tidy spaces to start making new messes. If that's true, what is to be done?

We can begin by saying that the conservative project has a kind of built-in cognitive dissonance: conservatives obey the imperative to fight for their principles while expecting defeats to be bigger and more numerous than victories. The psychological armor that protected the *National Review* conservatives of the 1950s was their belief that being denounced as cranks and menaces for asserting the political equivalent of 2 plus 2 equals 4 was a badge of honor and a source of great, iconoclastic fun. William F. Buckley, Jr., in particular demonstrated through his public persona as much as his arguments, how to be a simultaneously fierce and happy warrior against opponents who were much likelier to have the *Times* than the truth on their side.

The new Reformers' effort to fashion a conservatism that can win again is deeply earnest, but could avail itself of a bit of the spirit of standing athwart history yelling Stop, instead of debating how and when to seize the future. Without that attitude, the Reformers will be tempted either to define conservatism down, or to define victory down.

Defining conservatism down means giving the benefit of the doubt to every policy proposal that pushes the conservative coalition closer to, and finally back above, the magic 50% line. The practice of conviction politics in a democracy, by contrast, requires the mission to define the coalition, rather than be defined by it. The Reformers Brooks cites seem cognizant of this problem. Frum, for example, laments the "tremendous resistance to any push for change" in the conservative rank-and-file, but points out that the change he advocates is in conservatism's method more than its content. "What our party needs is not more 'moderation.' It is more empiricism." The danger is that the Reformers' audience, including their politically ambitious readers, will be too eager to embrace any policy idea that might win votes as "conservative enough."

Defining victory down, on the other hand, means using the probability of ultimate defeat to justify immediate capitulation, and then celebrating that surrender as evidence of refinement and perspicacity. This is the position urged by Sam Tanenhaus, whose essay, "Conservatism is Dead," appeared in the *New Republic* earlier this year. John Judis was right, in other words, but a prophet 16 years before his time.

As it happens, Judis wrote a biography of William Buckley 20 years ago, and Tanenhaus is completing one now. Tanenhaus's previous book was a biography of Whittaker Chambers, who was closer to Buckley personally and philosophically than politically. The two friends were resolute anti-Communists in the 1950s, but Chambers declined Buckley's initial invitation to join *National Review*. "He sympathized with the magazine's opposition to increasingly centralized government," according to Tanenhaus, but believed "that New Deal economics had become the basis for governing in postwar America, and the right had no plausible choice but to accept this fact," rather than pursue a "futile" challenge to it.

This debate, according to Tanenhaus, is the "story of American conservatism." It pits "those who have upheld the Burkean ideal of replenishing civil society by adjusting to changing conditions" against "those committed to a revanchist counterrevolution, the restoration of America's

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pre-welfare state ancien regime." If Tanenhaus considers himself a conservative in any sense, he clearly does so in the first, not in the straw-man alternative he constructs. He approvingly quotes Chambers:

> Those who remain in the world, if they will not surrender on its terms, must maneuver within its terms. That is what conservatives must decide: how much to give in order to survive at all; how much to give in order not to give up the basic principles.

Besides having a somber beauty, this passage is undeniably correct. It does not follow, however, that any particular decision about how much conservatives must give to maneuver within the world's terms is a correct or defensible one. According to Yuval Levin, the problem with Tanenhaus's use of Chambers is that he makes "playing nice with liberals" *the* criterion defining true conservatism. "In this view," says Levin, "conservatism is accommodation—it is pure gradualism, with no concern for where we are gradually headed."

"I know that I am leaving the winning side for the losing side," Chambers told the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1948, "but it is better to die on the losing side than to live under Communism." Chambers died in 1961, 30 years before history would show that he had joined the winning side after all. His refusal to reckon how much of *that* basic principle to give up made Chambers a conservative hero.

The American Experiment

Tanenhaus admires Chambers, and does not dispute the wickedness of Communism, but doesn't believe there are any *other* basic principles left for conservatives to worry about or defend. "What our politics has consistently demanded of its leaders, if they are to ascend to the status of disinterested statesmen, is not the assertion but rather the renunciation of ideology," he writes. Yet he applies this standard far more leniently to liberals than to conservatives. In the era of Radical Chic, "liberals unwittingly squeezed themselves into the stereotypes conservatives had invented," according to Tanenhaus. Well, perhaps. Or, maybe, the McGovernite liberals who admired and feared a menagerie of thugs, loons, and trust-fund revolutionaries were vindicating the worst kind of stereotype—an accurate stereotype—which conservatives didn't invent but discerned.

Be that as it may, by 2009 these disputes about liberalism and the 1960s are all bong water over the dam, Tanenhaus says. Liberals renounced their ideology "a generation ago when they shed the programmatic 'New Politics' of the left and embraced instead a broad majoritarianism." Now it's time for conservatives to renounce *their* ideology.

Yet somehow oblivious to the post-ideological spirit proclaimed by Tanenhaus, the Pelosi Democrats stuffed every social pork-barrel project on the shelf into their $787 billion stimulus bill. Similarly, the generation-old liberal devotion to comity can easily be mistaken for something less conciliatory when it comes to the politics of abortion. As Douthat argued last year, the pro-choice idea of compromise, stipulating at the outset that *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) remain the law of the land forever, is identical to the Soviet Union's posture during arms talks: what's ours is ours, and what's yours is negotiable.

By the same token, the Californians who voted against same-sex marriage last November will be puzzled to learn from Tanenhaus about the broad majoritarianism of the post-ideological liberals. This expressed itself through anti-majoritarian lawsuits, filed days after the election, asking the state supreme court to declare null and void the votes of 6.3 million citizens who deliberated in good faith a public question legitimately placed before them. The liberal spirit of live-and-let-live inspired, as well, virulent protests in front of churches that opposed same-sex marriage, and the workplaces of individuals who donated a few hundred dollars to the campaign against it.

If Tanenhaus greatly exaggerates the liberal spirit of accommodation, in other words, then what he is asking of conservatives is not the reciprocal but the unilateral renunciation of ideology. The question that has "haunted" conservatism for half a century, according to Tanenhaus, is that conservatives know what they're against, but not what they're for. But aren't there usually some illuminating connections between the two, as in the famous lines by Evelyn Waugh about Rudyard Kipling?

> He was a conservative in the sense that he believed civilization to be something laboriously achieved which was only precariously defended. He wanted to see the defences fully manned and he hated the liberals because he thought them gullible and feeble, believing in the easy perfectibility of man and ready to abandon the work of centuries for sentimental qualms.

In the American context, our experiment in self-government is the precarious undertaking conservatives defend. Most experiments fail. America's astounding triumphs in the past do not guarantee perpetual success going forward. Whatever their differences about conservatism's foundations, conservatives agree that defending the American experiment more often requires opposing than accommodating liberalism.

The danger liberalism poses to the American experiment comes from its disposition to deplete rather than replenish the capital required for self-government. Entitlement programs overextend not only financial but political capital. They proffer new "rights," goad people to demand and expand those rights aggressively, and disdain truth in advertising about the nature or scope of the new debts and obligations those rights will engender. The experiment in self-government requires the cultivation, against the grain of a democratic age, of the virtues of self-reliance, patience, sacrifice, and restraint. The people who have this moral and social capital understand and accept that there "will be many long periods when you put more into your institutions than you get out," according to David Brooks. Instead, liberalism promotes snarling but unrugged individualism, combining an absolute right "to the lifestyle of one's choice (regardless of the social cost) with an equally fundamental right to be supported at state expense," as the Manhattan Institute's Fred Siegel once described it. Finally, the capital bestowed by vigilance against all enemies, foreign and domestic, is squandered when liberals insist on approaching street gangs, illegal immigrants, and terrorist regimes in the hopeful belief that, to quote the political scientist Joseph Cropsey, "trust edifies and absolute trust edifies absolutely."

Conservatives have no guarantees that they will be able to save the American experiment from those who cavalierly dissipate the capital required to sustain it. They can only struggle to prudently reconcile the experiment's deepest needs with the exigencies posed by today's circumstances and threats. If that reconciliation ultimately requires nothing short of morally disgusting compromises that give up basic principles, the conservative will, instead, cheerfully commit to doing his duty for the duration, fully expecting to die on the losing side.

William Voegeli is a contributing editor to the Claremont Review of Books *and a visiting scholar at Claremont McKenna College's Henry Salvatori Center for the Study of Individual Freedom in the Modern World.* *This essay is part of the Taube American Values Series, made possible by the Taube Family Foundation.*

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Book Review by R. Shep Melnick

The Two Billion Dollar Judge

Complex Justice: The Case of Missouri v. Jenkins, by Joshua M. Dunn.
University of North Carolina Press, 240 pages, $37.50

By almost any standard, *Missouri v. Jenkins*, the Kansas City, Missouri, school desegregation case, was extraordinary. Between 1985 and 2003 federal judges ordered more than $2 billion in new spending by the school district to encourage desegregation. Not only did they double property taxes to pay this huge bill, but they imposed an income tax surcharge on everyone who lived or worked in the city. The court order turned every high school and middle school (as well as half the elementary schools) into "magnet schools," each with a distinctive theme—including not merely science, performing arts, and computer studies, but also classical Greek, Asian studies, agribusiness, and environmental studies. The newly constructed classical Greek high school housed an Olympic-sized pool with an underwater observation room, an indoor track, a gymnastic center, and racquetball courts. The former coach of the Soviet Olympic fencing team was hired to teach inner-city students how to thrust and parry. The school system spent almost a million dollars a year to recruit white kids from the suburbs, and even hired door-to-door taxi service for them. By 1995 Kansas City was spending over $10,000 per student, more than any comparable school system in the country. Despite this massive effort, litigation failed either to improve the quality of education or to reduce racial isolation. Test scores continued to drop, and the percentage of minority students continued to rise. Eventually, black parents—who had long opposed the court's heavy emphasis on "magnet schools" designed to draw whites into the school system—insisted upon a return to neighborhood schools.

In *Complex Justice* Joshua Dunn does a masterly job bringing this complex case to life. An assistant professor of political science at the University of Colorado, he knows the case inside out and writes about it engagingly. Not only does he explain the legal issues in terms non-experts can understand, but he has a firm grasp of the local politics behind the litigation. He has mined the extensive legal record and conducted interviews with almost all the important participants. Most importantly, he refuses to accept stock answers to the central question: who destroyed the Kansas City school system? He insists, counterintuitively, that the man who presided over the case for two decades, District Court Judge Russell Clark, should not bear most of the blame for this educational disaster. Dunn is more inclined to blame the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals (which, he argues, gave Judge Clark little room to maneuver) and the Supreme Court (which imposed conflicting demands on lower courts in desegregation cases). Dunn's refusal to finger a convenient scapegoat forces the reader to confront a number of the disconcerting dilemmas of school desegregation.

One of the oddest features of *Missouri v. Jenkins* was that it was not initiated by civil rights groups or parents who claimed that the school system discriminated against minority students, but rather by the Kansas City, Missouri, School District (KCMSD) itself. After the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and declared separate educational facilities inherently unequal, Kansas City desegregated its schools quickly and without recourse to litigation. In subsequent decades the black population expanded rapidly while whites moved to the suburbs. By the late 1970s nearly two-thirds of the students in the system were black. When the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare charged the KCMSD with running a segregated system, the KCMSD responded by filing suit against the surrounding suburban school districts and the states of Missouri and Kansas, claiming that they had contributed to the racial isolation of city schools. This was the first time a school board had ever filed a desegregation suit—and the last. The district court judge quickly found the KCMSD's argument incompatible with the Supreme Court's 1974 decision in *Milliken v. Bradley*, which had absolved suburbs of responsibility for the concentration of minority students in urban schools.

Instead of dismissing the case, though, the judge transformed the plaintiff school district into a defendant, and then searched for a substitute plaintiff. After the NAACP and the ACLU refused to take the case, Judge Clark appointed Arthur Benson, a wealthy, white, liberal attorney, to present the plaintiff's case. But first Benson had to round up a few African-American children to "represent." This left Benson free to define the interests of the minority children who had allegedly suffered from unconstitutional segregation. Not only had the federal judge "defined the structure of the suit by picking the plaintiffs and defendants," but as litigation progressed, "Benson rarely failed in any legal appeal he made to Clark. This superficially cozy relationship eventually led black community leaders to accuse Clark and Benson of ignoring the true interests of black children." And with good reason.

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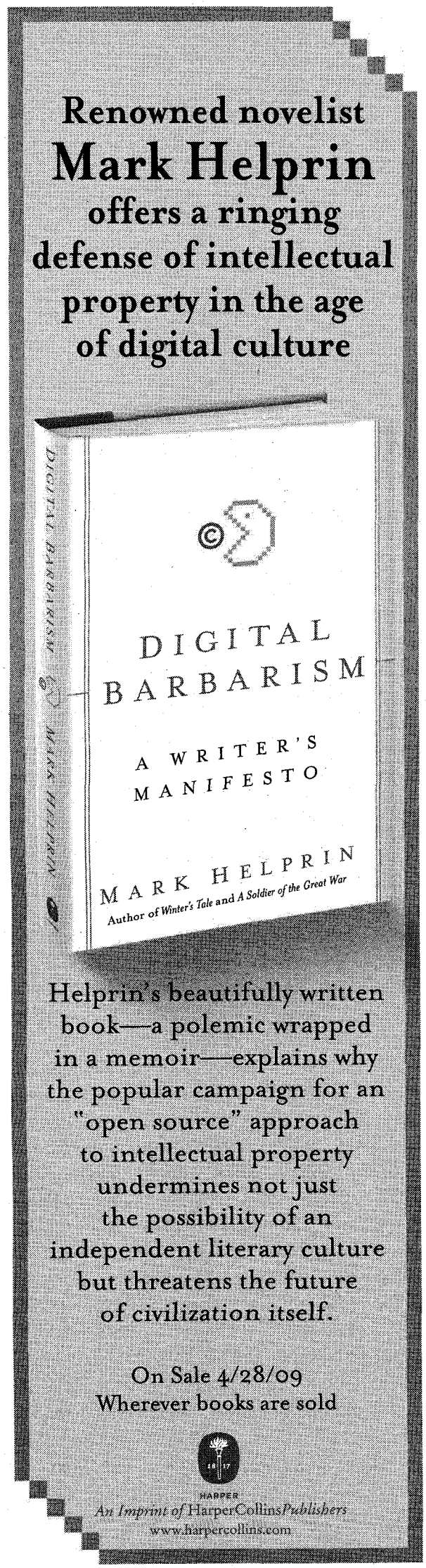

Given Judge Clark's unusual role in creating this lawsuit, why *shouldn't* he be blamed for the tragedy that followed? Dunn convincingly argues that Clark was not an activist judge in the tradition of Frank Johnson (who initiated judicial efforts to restructure state mental hospitals and schools for the developmentally disabled) or Jack Weinstein (who slyly orchestrated the huge Agent Orange settlement). In his initial ruling "Clark, at times, seemed contemptuous of Benson's claims. One by one, he refuted Benson's arguments but in the end found a rationale for the verdict." So why did this rather cautious judge undertake such an enormous task on the basis of such an unconvincing legal argument? Dunn's reasoning is straightforward: "the Eighth Circuit would obviously have overturned him if he had ruled differently." Not only had that appeals court found St. Louis guilty of unconstitutional segregation in similar circumstances, but when the Eighth Circuit met *en banc* to review the Kansas City case, it came within a single vote of reversing Judge Clark for being too *lenient* with the school system. Sixteen years later, long after it had become clear that the desegregation order had been a miserable failure, the Eighth Circuit refused to allow Clark's successor to terminate the case. Although the Supreme Court was by then urging lower court judges to be more cautious, it gave them little clear guidance on how to proceed in these troublesome cases. In short, the Supreme Court remained aloof while the Eighth Circuit remained pigheaded. Under the circumstances, Judge Clark became increasingly attached to the desegregation plan he had spent a large part of his career developing.

What was distinctive about Clark's approach was that he refused to take the simple but futile step of using busing to spread around the city's few remaining white students. He recognized that this would only accelerate white flight. Since the Supreme Court had prevented federal judges from ordering busing between cities and suburbs, he decided to take measures to dramatically improve the quality of education in Kansas City schools. This, he expected, would pull white students back into city schools—or, as the court put it, increase their "desegregative attractiveness." Even if this effort at integration failed (as it quickly and obviously did), then the minority students left in city schools would at least be more likely to receive the "equal educational opportunity" promised in *Brown*. In the abstract, this was not a bad idea. But it never came close to working.

Why, despite all the money poured into the Kansas City school system, did the court do such a lousy job improving urban education? One can cull at least four reasons from Dunn's detailed examination of the court order's implementation. First, Judge Clark relied much too heavily on two educational "experts" who had quickly thrown together an ambitious magnet school plan. These education school professors made extravagant claims about the prospect for rapid improvement: instituting their plans, they claimed, would raise Kansas City students' test scores to the national average within four or five years and would draw in enough white students from the suburbs to make the school system 40% non-minority. Even Benson, the lawyer for the plaintiffs, found these claims preposterous. But who could argue with such educational "experts" with their reams of reports on "best practices"?

Second, the judge repeatedly ignored the preferences and complaints of black parents whose children were the subject of his experiment. Many black parents objected not only to their children being bused long distances, but also to the fact that most of the new schools emphasized exotic themes rather than the basic skills so many students lacked. When the black school superintendent, the black members of the school board, several dozen black pastors, and the local chapter of the NAACP asked the court to institute a more modest magnet plan, they were rebuffed. The longer the case went on, the deeper grew the schism between black leaders and parents and the white judges, lawyers, and experts claiming to represent black interests.

Third, the school administrators who were handed this huge pile of money were hopelessly incompetent and corrupt. Between 1969 and 1999 the school system went through 21 superintendents. In 1991, after firing yet another superintendent, the school board hired a white replacement who had recently been fired for running a California school district into bankruptcy. His primary qualification was that he was an avid supporter of magnet schools. After surrounding himself with "highly paid, mostly white assistants," he took a paid medical leave, and moved to Florida, where a local TV news crew caught him doing construction work on his new house. The central staff of the KCMSD grew to 600—one for every 60 students. By 1990 the district was spending less than half its budget on instruction. One high school spent nearly $50,000 on a trophy case despite the fact that it had no trophies to display. Dunn reports that every year "hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of computers, overhead projectors, VCRs, and TVs would disappear." The court substantially increased teacher pay, but did nothing to remove incompetent teachers.

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Finally, the court remained wedded to the notion that black children cannot learn unless white children sit in their classrooms. Dunn offers the following description of the judge's effort to create integrated schools:

> Under Clark's plan each magnet school had a rigid quota system. For every six black students, there had to be four white students. The quota system was based on total enrollment in a school rather than the total number of seats. Hence, if a school had 1,000 total seats but had 240 white students, only 400 black students could attend that school. Because the district could not come close to filling all of the "white" seats in the magnet schools, many black children could not attend the magnet school of their choice, even though space was available in the school. The quota system was so rigid that...the district became concerned about being able to find space for all of its black students. In 1989 there were over 7,000 black students on waiting lists for magnet schools even though there were thousands of available seats. Adding insult to injury was KCMSD's advertising campaign, which touted the magnet schools as the "best education in Kansas City." ...These quotas and the penalties they imposed on minority children infuriated the black community.

This anger among black parents spawned a political organization that eventually took control of the school board and forced a return to neighborhood schools.

One can agree with Dunn that the Supreme Court and the Eighth Circuit bear much of the responsibility for what happened in Kansas City and still conclude that he goes a bit easy on Judge Clark. Clark was distressingly slow to change his plan when it became clear that white students would not stream back into urban schools, that magnet schools were doing little to raise student achievement, and that millions of taxpayer dollars were being poured down a rat hole. He blamed his plan's failure on the ineptness of the school system and its penchant for "lavish" spending without taking any responsibility for his own mistakes. Even more importantly, he made little effort to explain to appellate courts what was happening on the ground. Since district court judges are the only members of the judiciary with the capacity to monitor developments in these complex institutional reform cases, they have a special responsibility to share this assessment—including all the bad news—with their superiors. If the judges on the Eighth Circuit remained woefully ignorant of the realities of urban education, it is in part because no one made an effort to teach them.

Dunn emphasizes that while the judicial effort to improve Kansas City schools was a dismal failure, this case does not prove the oft-repeated claim that courts are weak institutions. As he puts it, "Judge Clark showed an extraordinary capacity to command others and have those commands followed. He ordered the KCMSD and the state of Missouri to build multimillion-dollar school buildings, and they were built; he ordered tax increases on the citizens of Kansas City, and they were imposed." What the judiciary demonstrated in Kansas City was not its lack of power, but its lack of wisdom and prudence. Never did any of the judges involved in this decades-long case—from the district court to the Eighth Circuit to the Supreme Court—speak clearly about what they were trying to accomplish, the trade-offs among their various goals, or the best ways to measure the results of their costly experiment. They remained lost in a fog of legal abstractions. The case of *Missouri v. Jenkins* shows that courts are in fact capable of bringing about significant social change: they turned a merely failing school system into a much more expensive, totally dysfunctional one. What courts have not demonstrated is the capacity to produce the equal educational opportunity that they so ostentatiously and self-righteously champion.

R. Shep Melnick is the Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., Professor of American Politics at Boston College.

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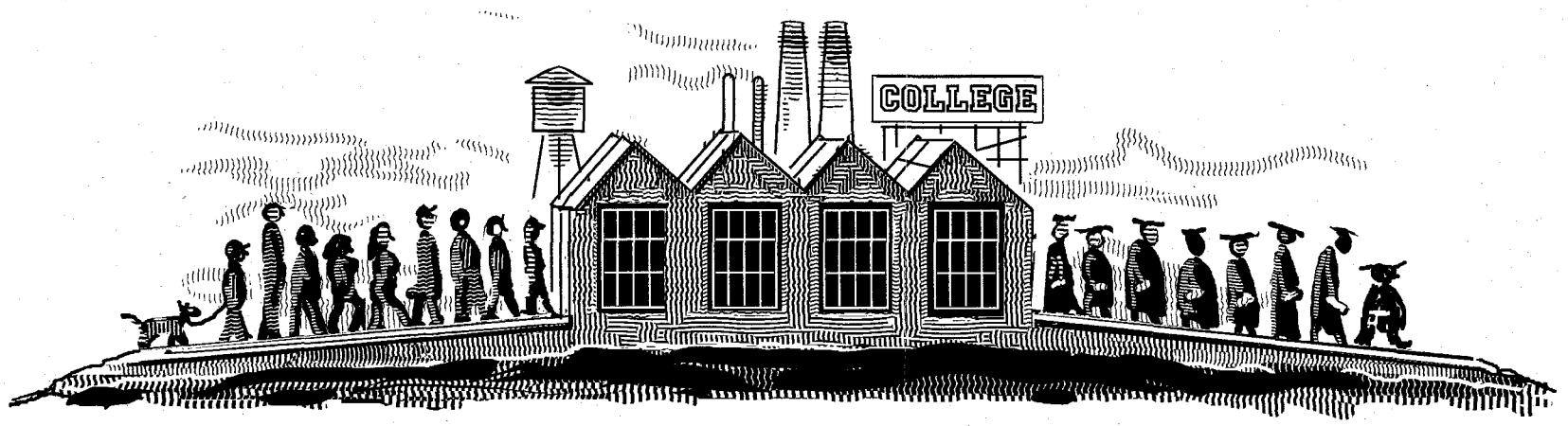
Book Review by Richard Vedder

The Education Mill

The Race between Education and Technology, by Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz.
Harvard University Press, 496 pages, $39.95



The academic establishment has been effusive in its praise of Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz's new book, *The Race between Education and Technology*. Larry Summers, Harvard guru and chief economic advisor to President Barack Obama, says "this is empirical economic scholarship at its finest." Princeton's Alan Krueger adds, "this book represents the best of what economics has to offer," sentiments echoed by the University of Chicago's Steven Levitt and University of Rochester's Stan Engerman. Let me be a bit of a skunk at the love fest by offering an alternative view.

Goldin and Katz, professors of economics at Harvard, argue that American higher education contributed, during the 19th and most of the 20th century, both to America's long-term economic growth and the achievement of its egalitarian ideals. In the past three decades, however, a dramatic slowdown in the growth in educational attainment has contributed to something of a reduction in American economic growth and, most importantly to the authors, a sharp rise in economic inequality.

More specifically, Goldin and Katz argue that education enhances productivity, and the recent slowdown in the growth of skills has reduced productivity and income growth. Because technological advances are continuing as fast as ever, and since these tend to favor higher skill attainment, the demand for educated Americans is rising rapidly, which, other things being equal, increases their relative wages. Until about 1975, this rise in demand was counteracted by an equally or even more impressive growth in the supply of highly educated workers, so relative wages did not accelerate, and wage-induced inequality did not rise—indeed, it even fell at times. The slow growth in educational attainment since 1970 or 1975, however, has slowed the supply increase, so relative wages of the educated are rising relatively rapidly, increasing income inequality, which "many commentators" believe "can contribute to social and political discord." What should we do? The authors recommend that we promote better educational performance at the K-12 level through smaller class sizes and higher teacher salaries. We should increase spending for early childhood education. And we should deal with rising college costs by "more generous college financial aid for low-income youth...." To deal with rising inequality, they also favor increasing income tax progressivity and judiciously using labor market "institutional interventions" like the minimum wage. In short, increase government spending and regulation, and make taxation more progressive—more or less the prescriptions adopted by the Obama Administration in its stimulus bill and proposed federal budget. The authors are industrious and detailed in making their arguments, mining neglected historical documents such as the Iowa State Census of 1915. There is even a four-page discussion, complete with regression results, of the role that electricity played in promoting high school graduation in the early 20th century. The authors spent literally years doing the research on educational attainment and economic inequality that gives the book something of an authoritative aura.

Yet I think they make a number of implicit assumptions that are debatable and call into question the accuracy of the story they tell, not to mention the proposed remedies for the alleged problem. Let me outline six: educational attainment lowers inequality; lower inequality is needed and desirable; higher educational attainment promotes economic growth; more public spending will promote higher attainment; therefore, more public education spending will mean more economic growth; and finally, differences between human beings in cognitive skills and other personal attributes are relatively unimportant.

The notion that enhanced educational attainment will raise income equality rests on the assumption that an increase in the proportion of educated workers relative to less educated ones will lower wages of the former group relative to the latter. This is what probably happened around 1970 when college enrollments were soaring. It might well happen that way, but statistical work that Daniel Bennett and I have been conducting suggests that the relation between educational attainment and income equality is not so clear-cut. Some preliminary results even suggest the opposite: higher educational attainment is associated with *more inequality*. But even if Goldin and Katz are right, there are other reasons why conventional policy responses may have little effect. To cite one problem, my associates and I at the Center for College Affordability and Productivity have observed that the statistical relationship between state higher education appropriations and the proportion of adults with

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college degrees is not positive, even after allowing for various lags for graduation rates to catch up with the higher spending.

Goldin and Katz clearly believe greater income equality is good for America. They grudgingly admit that "some degree of economic inequality *may* [emphasis added] be desirable to spur incentives...." But there is no discussion of the equality-efficiency trade-off. Why is the income distribution of 1970 "good" and that of 2008 "bad"? How do we know? Inequality's alleged threat to social order is not documented, and some polling results suggest interpersonal variations in income are less controversial than the authors suggest, Obama's election notwithstanding. Moreover, the inequality in the distribution of lifetime income, or of consumption spending, is far less substantial than suggested by income figures for any single year.

It is true that areas with relatively high levels of educational attainment have typically grown more than areas with less educated populations. But the question is: will the resources devoted to increasing the proportion of well-educated people generate a return, in terms of incremental income, that justifies the expenditure? In reality, human beings differ, and those with the greatest motivation to acquire higher skills have largely done so. Is it necessarily true that increasing the proportion of students attending college will promote higher incomes? Attending college is not costless, and those costs rise and the benefits decline as we reach further down into the pool of talent. The authors approvingly talk of surging educational attainment in Europe—but fail to note that economic growth rates there have fallen, averaging levels lower than in the U.S. in recent decades. Surging European educational attainment has been associated with falling, not rising, growth rates.

Goldin and Katz assume that higher spending on higher education will increase attainment rates. States spending more on higher education do indeed get higher college attendance, but only modestly so. Most such increases do not go to hold tuition charges down or increase financial aid to the poor, and therefore it isn't surprising that we do not find a positive relationship between state spending in higher education and the proportion of adults with college degrees. The call for more public spending on education implies it will enhance economic growth rates, and the authors even state that "the short-run fiscal burdens of increased spending on education are likely to be more than offset in the long run with increased tax revenues from a more productive workforce and lower public spending to combat social problems." Yet when we run numerous regressions using statewide data on the relationship between higher education spending and economic growth, we typically get a negative relationship: higher spending, *lower* growth. Money taken from the market-disciplined competitive sector to finance less efficient universities partially isolated from market forces by third-party payments seems to have a negative growth effect.

Goldin and Katz implicitly assume that education *causes* the difference in incomes and productivity between high school and college graduates. Underlying their argument is an unwritten assumption that all people are created equal in terms of cognitive endowments, motivation, discipline, etc. It is extremely difficult to correct econometrically for all the human variations in characteristics, and I believe at least some of the wage differentials that the authors associate with education relate to the fact that typically college graduates are brighter, harder working, and more dependable, than those who leave school after getting a high school diploma. Had they not even gone on to college, these young strivers would have earned more than the existing pool of high school graduates.

College is a screening device—a point ignored by the authors. Employers hire workers with college degrees because the diploma raises the probability that the graduate will be talented and diligent, because the colleges themselves have screened their entrants, admitting those with some prospects for success, and then not graduating close to half of them (another point ignored by Goldin and Katz), many for being deficient academically. While their book has a bibliography of well over 500 entries that covers 28 pages, there is not a single reference to *The Bell Curve* (1994), the well-known work of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray on the importance of cognitive endowments to educational attainment and vocational success.

Nowhere in this book do you learn that for every 100 students entering high school, only about 20 have four-year college degrees 10 years later. The problem often is not access but attrition. Nor do we learn that in 1970 only three out of every 100 mail carriers had college degrees, compared with 12 today. Do college-educated mail carriers promote economic growth? I doubt it. Maybe Richard Freeman's *The Overeducated American* (1976) is still relevant. Do we need more than 15,000 Americans with *advanced* degrees fixing people's hair? One study says that, five years after graduation, only 61% of college graduates are in jobs requiring a college degree.

In addition, the rising differential between high school and college earnings beginning in the late 1970s corresponds nicely with the beginning of enforcement of *Duke v. Griggs Power* (1971), a decision making it nearly impossible for employers to test prospective workers, forcing them to rely more on colleges to screen applicants for competency. (Goldin and Katz ignore, by the way, the stagnation in the high school/college earnings differential for females in the past 15 or 20 years.) The authors also accept soaring education costs as a given, not criticizing significantly the perverse effects of unionization and rapidly rising salaries for professors with light teaching loads. Perhaps higher education access would be better enhanced by making professors teach more, and reducing administrative and recreational expenses that contribute to the college cost explosion. Perhaps we should do cost-benefit analysis on more academic research. The authors' implicit faith that the ways of the academy are fixed and invulnerable to change, even as technology forces changes on everyone else, is one this writer cannot embrace.

In short, Goldin and Katz's errors of omission rival their errors of commission. *The Race between Education and Technology* is an interesting book with some good data and historical analysis, but it fails to persuade because its authors seem blinded by a desire to increase resources for the business that feeds them.

Richard Vedder is a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity, and professor of economics at Ohio University.

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Book Review by Lawrence M. Mead

Econs and Humans

Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness,
by Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein. Yale University Press, 304 pages, $26

The economy, and economics, are in crisis. A severe recession is upon us, and the Obama Administration, although stuffed full of leading economists, has only the vaguest idea of how to fix it. The bursting of the housing bubble cast in doubt the reigning orthodoxy that financial markets can govern Wall Street. The institutions that fund housing over-extended themselves, granting mortgages to many home buyers who could not afford them. Banks woke up last fall to realize that many of the loans they held were worthless. Some banks failed; others were bailed out by the government. Further lending dried up, and growth reversed. The vast stimulus bill passed by Congress in February is a desperate attempt to restart the economy with a flood of cash. No one is at all sure it will work because panic reigns, an emotion that lies entirely outside conventional economics.

In economic theory, the markets should have refused credit to the insolvent or charged them higher interest to cover the risks of default. But this assumes greater powers to calculate risk than buyers and sellers had. Mortgages today are packaged as securities that have become too complex for analysts to appraise. So everyone went on selling, confident that the prices were real. Suddenly it became plain that they were not. On a Wall Street stocked with MBAs, how could this happen?

Economics has traditionally ignored psychology. In *Nudge*, Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein take a step toward greater realism about it. Thaler teaches economics at the University of Chicago and was an unofficial advisor to the Obama campaign. Sunstein is a law professor at Harvard and now the head of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Obama Administration. The authors start off by differentiating "Econs" from "Humans." The former are the efficient calculators imagined in economic theory, able to weigh multiple options, forecast all the consequences of each, and choose rationally. The latter are ordinary people, who, like the analysts on Wall Street, fall well short of *homo economicus*. Humans operate by rules of thumb that often lead them astray. They are too prone to generalize, biased in favor of the status quo, more concerned to avoid loss than make gains, among other shortcomings. So they often fail to manage their personal affairs to the best advantage.

Thaler and Sunstein think that ordinary folk should be "nudged" to decide more rationally. A "nudge," as they conceive it, means some change in the "choice architecture" surrounding personal decisions that will cause Humans to choose differently and better, even though an Econ would be unswayed. Often that means changing the default option—the choice made for people if they do not choose. For example, many employees save too little for their retirement because they fail to sign up for 401(k) plans offered by their employers. The authors would change the default from opt-out to opt-in—employees would be enrolled in pension plans *unless* they said otherwise. Workers would also be encouraged to commit now to pay higher pension contributions in future, if not today. Both steps would raise savings substantially. Another nudge would be to establish better defaults for allocating pension contributions among different investments. Also, many people say they are willing to donate their organs for transplants when they die, yet fail to sign up. Again, the authors would change the default from opt-out to opt-in—people would be presumed willing to donate *unless* they declined.

The authors say that for Econs, the more choices the better, but Humans should not face too many options, lest they be overwhelmed. Sweden erred in reforming its pension system so that people had to choose among myriad retirement plans on their own, something many did poorly. The authors criticize Medicare for forcing seniors to choose among multiple private plans to get prescription drug coverage. Subscribers should face only a few options based on their prior drug history.

The usual objections to such paternalism are that it is coercive and that those making choices for people can't be trusted. Thaler and Sunstein

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say that their paternalism is "libertarian": their nudges would allow people to deviate from recommended choices without significant cost. The authors also trust that nudging could and would be publicly justified, not secretive.

Nudge draws on behavioral economics, a branch of economics that studies the limits of rationality. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky first developed the field in the 1970s and '80s, and Thaler was one of their collaborators. But although Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in 2002, behavioralism is still a marginal field in economics. That is because looking too closely at people's actual psychology would constrain the ambitions of the dismal science too much.

Mostly, economists imagine how people would behave in some situation *if* they were Econs. Individuals, they believe, will act so as to maximize their utility, usually meaning material rewards in some form. That is, they will respond to incentives. Whether they consciously do so or not is ignored. Most economists long ago accepted Milton Friedman's argument that economic theory need not be realistic, only predictive. For mainstream economics, it is enough that people act *as if* they economized, whatever their actual psychology. It is enough that they do so in the aggregate and long-term, if not in every case. The predictions are then tested against actual behavior using data usually gathered by others. Economists construct elaborate statistical models to show that the incentives tested do sway actions in the expected direction, controlling for other factors.

Economists have boldly extended this approach to behavior well beyond the economy—everything from marriage to international relations. The beauty of "rational choice" is that it can "explain" virtually anything, without close inquiry into people's actual attitudes or other grubby details. Provided only that data is available, expected outcomes can be posited and confirmed entirely from behind one's computer. One can turn out articles at high speed, which serves academic incentives to publish and not perish. The appeal of these methods is considerable. Rational choice has expanded beyond economics to take over much of sociology and political science, provoking intense resistance from scholars wedded to more eclectic or less mathematical methods.

What economists mainly study in graduate school is not the economy but the mathematical methods required to frame and confirm rational choice hypotheses. They then apply this "tool kit" promiscuously to all manner of questions. Pride in their quantitative skills makes leading economists among the most cocksure figures in academia. In *Freakonomics* (2005), for instance, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner showed how economic methods can explain numerous puzzles in social behavior. The results are intriquing but also superficial.

For example, Levitt and Dubner show why teachers in public schools have incentives to help their students cheat on achievement tests—to make themselves look better. But they cannot explain why the teachers would violate their professional ethics to do this. Similarly, they show why low-level drug dealers have an incentive to work for low wages—to become drug bosses and make much more. But they cannot explain the climate of failure that causes poor youth to go into the drug trade in the first place. To explain behavior more fully would require the authors to undertake a deeper, more humble inquiry, involving more information sources and more hands-on contact with the phenomena under study. That sort of labor generates few academic plaudits today, and most economists avoid it.

Thaler and Sunstein are not immune to cocksure pronouncements themselves. Although they advise us to expect less from popular rationality, they recommend expanding choice in schooling and in credit markets, mainly by forcing plainer disclosure of what each option might mean. They would allow patients to give up the right to sue doctors for malpractice in return for lower fees. They would even privatize marriage, taking government out of the business of policing intimate relationships. These ideas are less well supported than the "nudges." They appeal precisely to the Econ personality that the authors otherwise question. In these chapters we still sense the facile pretensions of economics to be a universal science.

The authors dig more deeply into reality than most economists, yet their empiricism is still limited. They find the public lacking in rationality, but they never discuss the more serious dysfunctions of the underclass. Perhaps the middle class under-saves, but the poor often fail to work at all, generate female-headed families, and succumb to drug addiction or crime. To counter those patterns, social policy has lately become far more paternalist than anything Thaler and Sunstein have in mind. Welfare recipients must work to get aid, the homeless must obey rules to get shelter, and students must pass tests to be promoted in school. Those demands are not libertarian. They are presented as obligations, not choices.

Even among the mainstream population, behavioralism covers only a small part of economic behavior. Its findings come largely from closely controlled experiments in which only certain variables are manipulated. The results hardly apply to a crisis like the present, in which the whole economic system seems in question. To understand what is happening and how to change it requires a broader, less rigorous grasp of the economy than today's mathematical economics can provide. Insight is more likely to come from public figures who are only notionally economists but have long experience of government with its many inputs—such as former Federal Reserve chairmen Paul Volcker and Alan Greenspan. The current chairman, Ben Bernanke, is an academic economist who has seemed out of his depth, although he is learning fast.

The market's "invisible hand" forces buyers and sellers to serve others as they serve themselves, but it must be undergirded by rules of legality and fair play that do not always serve individual self-interest. Morals, not just calculation, have broken down in today's crisis. Borrowers and lenders no longer trust each other enough to do business. To establish or restore trust requires civic virtue, something which today's economics, based as it is on egoistic calculation, cannot explain or produce.

Today's economists are unlikely to perceive, let alone solve, a moral crisis because, as *Nudge* admits, they are "pretty unsociable creatures." They seek mainly their own advantage, and they expect others to do the same. The authors discuss Humans' tendency to care about the views of others only as a violation of rationality, not a virtue. Yet without it, who would make deals with strangers? A lack of trust and civility is one reason markets fail to make societies rich in the less developed world. The ethos of modern economics is at war with the moral basis of capitalism.

It was not always thus. The father of economics treated human nature as the foundation of the marketplace. Adam Smith produced an entire treatise on popular psychology—*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*—before he ventured to write *The Wealth of Nations*, with its paeans to economic freedom. People may appear selfish, he argued, but in fact they sympathize with the pains and pleasures of others. That virtue is essential to a successful society. Thaler and Sunstein observe it in Humans, and they display it themselves by seeking to nudge others toward rationality. Today's economics, however, marginalizes such thoughts, and can offer little guidance in our current predicament.

Lawrence M. Mead is Professor of Politics and Public Policy at New York University and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

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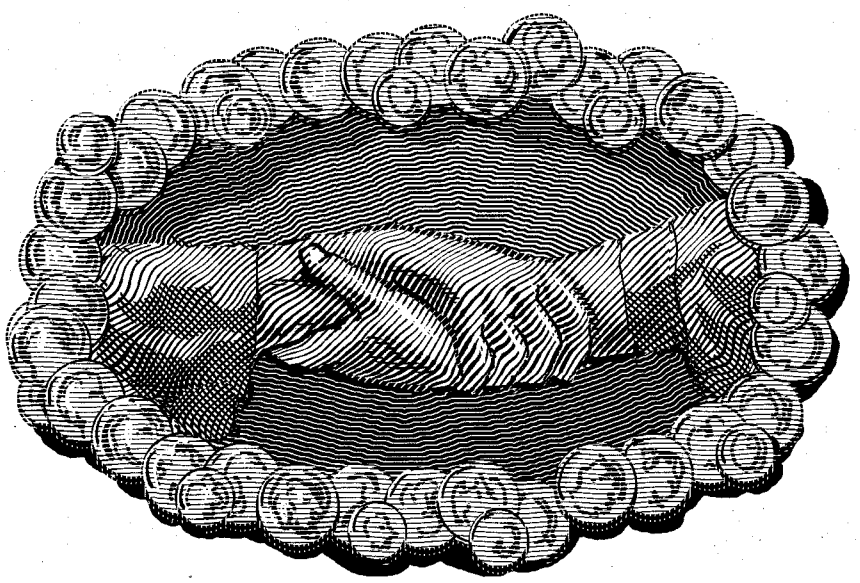
Essay by Robert J. Samuelson

What Caused the Financial Meltdown?



Any list of inventions that have transformed the human condition would include the plough, the printing press, the steam engine, and the generation of electricity. But perhaps the greatest of all is the creation of money, because money is the essential foundation of all modern societies. It is money that dispenses with the traditional quest for self-sufficiency and the clumsy reliance on barter, enabling people and organizations to specialize. Prosperous, technologically advanced societies could not exist without the widespread acceptance of money.

This is so obvious that we rarely think about it, but once we do, we instinctively recognize that money's existence is something of a miracle. After all, we routinely take as tokens embodying real value pieces of paper—whether bills or checks—with little intrinsic worth. Even more astonishing, we have moved from paper to electronic money. We regard digital computer entries that we cannot see or touch as repositories of value. That these leaps of faith occur billions of times a day defines money's requisite traits: trust and confidence.

We are now rediscovering this truth, because the world has experienced since August 2007 what is generally regarded as the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Some venerable institutions including Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns, and Lehman Brothers have gone bankrupt or merged into stronger rivals. Large parts of the credit market—involving the "securitizing" of home mortgages, auto loans, and credit card debts into bonds—have shrunk dramatically. The economy has plunged into a deep recession. People wonder what happened. What caused confidence and trust to collapse?

The crisis also reminds us that the story of money is more than a curious historical detour. It's a central artery of civilization, because the spread of money led to the invention of finance, another building block of modern societies. Finance—whether by banks, securities markets, insurance contracts, or government—enables nations to save and invest for tomorrow. Along with specialization, the regard for the future made sustained economic growth possible. But as historian Niall Ferguson shows in his highly readable and informative *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*, money and finance have historically been a double-edged sword. They're usually a tremendous boon—and yet can also bring calamity.

"[P]overty is not the result of rapacious financiers exploiting the poor," he writes.

> It has much more to do with the *lack* of financial institutions.... Only when borrowers have access to efficient credit networks can they escape from the clutches of loan sharks, and only when savers can deposit their money in reliable banks can it be channeled from the idle rich to the industrious poor.

But financial breakdowns shred the fabric of ordinary life, undermining political and social cohesion. Lenin allegedly said that the best way to destroy a society is to debauch its currency. Banking panics and market "crashes" can be fearsome. "[F]ew things are harder to predict accurately than the timing and magnitude of financial crises," Ferguson argues, "because the financial system is so genuinely complex and so many of the relationships within it are non-linear, even chaotic."

What can't be easily understood can't be easily controlled. The origins and causes of the present economic crisis beg for greater clarity. Ferguson's panoramic overview of finance and Paul Krugman's *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008* get us part of the way to a better understanding. But there's more to the story than they imagine, or tell.

Money's Origins

We learn from introductory college economics that money serves three purposes: it is a medium of exchange, a unit of account (that is, a way of setting prices), and a store of value. Ferguson, the Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University and William Ziegler Professor at Harvard Business School, traces the earliest use of money to Mesopotamia about 5,000 years ago, when clay tablets were sometimes used to confirm specific transactions. The Romans had coins made of gold (*aureus*), silver (*denarius*), and bronze (*sestertius*), but for much of history most people had little recourse to money. In *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century: The Structure of Everyday Life* (1992), the historian Fernand Braudel noted that the money economy "was nowhere fully developed, even in a country like France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries...."

Until the last few hundred years, money generally meant metals whose natural scarcity was

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thought to guarantee their value. The Roman coins reflected this logic; gold was worth more because there was less gold. In the medieval world, the quest for wealth often became the pursuit of gold and silver. The Crusades, Ferguson contends, were at least partly intended to plunder the Muslim world of its precious metals. The explorations of the 16th and 17th centuries sought, too, to ease Europe's scarcity of metals. The discovery of vast silver deposits in Peru and Mexico made Spain a dominant power. Convoys of up to 100 ships transported the metals to Seville, where the crown took a fifth for itself. In the late 16th century, this metallic bonanza accounted for nearly half of Spain's royal spending.

Trade and war were crucibles of financial innovation. In Florence, the Medicis built their 15th-century banking empire in part by pioneering "bills of exchange": merchants who could not be paid immediately by their customers received "bills" (in effect, promissory notes) pledging payment at a fixed future date; the merchants could then raise cash by discounting the bills (that is, selling them at less than face value) with the Medicis'. Bonds were created, Ferguson relates, by Italian city-states—initially Venice and Florence—to pay for wars. Wealthy families were required to make loans that, in theory, would be repaid from taxes in peacetime.

Gradually, gold and silver coin (referred to as "specie") begat credit, new securities, and paper money. The Dutch invented the modern corporation—and common stock—with the creation in 1602 of the United Dutch Chartered East India Company, which received a government monopoly on the country's trade with Asia. In Amsterdam alone, there were 1,143 initial investors in this early "joint stock company." (The English East India Company, founded two years earlier, was only an eighth its size.) A stock market quickly arose to allow investors in the Dutch company to sell their shares. Paper money emerged as a way of minimizing the burdensome transfer of large stashes of coin. The Bank of England, created in 1694 to help pay war debts, received distinct privileges in return for investors "converting a portion of the government's debt into shares in the bank." The most important of these came in 1742: a partial monopoly on the issuance of paper notes in and around London.

Mississippi and the South Sea

By the 1800s, then, many features of modern financial markets had come into being. There were banks, stock markets, paper money, creditors, debtors, and investors. This system enabled merchants to get loans to ship goods before receiving payment and farmers to buy supplies before harvests. What we now call consumer credit barely existed. Stock and bond markets encouraged the aggregation of investment capital for new ventures—canals, railroads, textile mills, and (later) steel mills. Then as now, financial intermediaries—mostly banks and merchant banks (which sold bonds for governments, railroads, and other industrial concerns)—were thought necessary to evaluate the risks of lending and investing. It was their ability to separate good loans and investments from bad that gave them a moral claim to profits and protected other peoples' money. Risk was spread and calibrated.

That was the theory.

In practice, financial panics and crashes have a long history. Profits were not always ensured; money was not always protected. Among early crises, France's "Mississippi Bubble" and England's "South Sea Bubble," which occurred almost simultaneously in the early 18th century, are well known. Both crises involved attempts to reduce steep government debts, incurred mainly to finance wars, by offering shares in new entities that were granted exclusive privileges: in France, trade in the Louisiana territory west of the Mississippi River; in England, a monopoly on trade with Spain's South American empire (the South Sea). The prospective profits aimed to convince the countries' creditors to exchange their old claims for shares in the new enterprises. Today, we'd call this a "restructuring" of government debt.

Books discussed in this essay:

The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World,
by Niall Ferguson.
The Penguin Press, 432 pages, $29.95

The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008,
by Paul Krugman.
W.W. Norton & Company,
224 pages, $24.95

Probably the advertised profits would never have materialized. But these schemes collapsed quickly, because the promoters could not resist speculative temptations. Early investors—including the promoters—stood to make a fortune if the price of their shares doubled or tripled. In France, John Law, a renegade Scotsman, designed and managed the plan, including a bank that could issue paper money. Law promised 40% dividends on shares of the Mississippi Company. The dividends were paid with paper money. Investors could buy new shares by borrowing (again, in paper money) against the old. In June 1719, the Mississippi Company issued stock at 550 *livre* per share. By early September, the price was 5,000; by early December, it was 10,025!

Inflation emerged with a vengeance, as the volume of paper money (which supplemented gold and silver) soared. By the fall of 1720, Paris prices had roughly doubled from two years earlier. Meanwhile, shares of the Mississippi Company dropped to 1,000 in December and continued to plunge. Riots erupted; Law was briefly imprisoned. In England, the South Sea Bubble was smaller and less ruinous because its promoters could not create paper money at will. South Sea stock rose by a factor of 9.5 from its initial prices to its peak, Ferguson relates. The comparable increase for the Mississippi Company was 19.6.

Fixing the System

Money and finance posed other perils. One was inflation. But that seemed a problem only when countries abandoned gold and silver—as the French did in 1720 and later in the Revolution—and printed vast amounts of paper money. Mostly, paper money was limited by a country's supply of gold. The Bank of England's paper notes could by law be redeemed for gold. By the late 1800s, most developed countries had adopted the gold standard. In the United States, paper money had always been redeemable for gold or silver, with the notable exception of more than $500 million of "greenbacks" issued to pay for the Civil War. In the late 19th century, Americans' main complaint was deflation, or falling prices, because new gold supplies didn't keep pace with the demand for money. Debtors, particularly farmers, felt aggrieved because they had to repay loans in more expensive dollars.

More than inflation, bank panics seemed a threat. Depositors might periodically lose confidence that they could get their money. Bad loans, or rumors of bad loans, could trigger runs. Banks would be imperiled because no bank can meet the simultaneous demands of all depositors for their money—most, after all, has been lent. A run on one bank might cause runs on others. The entire banking system could collapse, depriving borrowers of loans and depositors of cash. One solution, as argued in 1873 by Walter Bagehot, the legendary editor of *The Economist*, was to have the Bank of England—or any central bank—act as "lender of last resort." It would lend to solvent banks (whose assets exceeded their liabilities) in times of crisis. Depositors, reassured that they could retrieve their money, would leave it be.

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Together, the gold standard and the lender of last resort seemed to ensure adequate financial stability. They buttressed confidence and trust. After the brutal Panic of 1907, Congress established the Federal Reserve—America's central bank—in 1913. But the Depression destroyed the prevailing consensus. Defending the gold standard and serving as lender of last resort were at odds. The first required central banks to be stingy with money and credit; the second, just the opposite. Temporarily, the gold standard prevailed, but the social costs were too great. From 1929 to 1933, two-fifths of U.S. banks failed. Ultimately, all advanced societies abandoned the gold standard. In 1933, Congress created deposit insurance; that would be the first line of defense against panic. Banks also would be strictly regulated and examined; banks engaging in shoddy or fraudulent practices would be shut. That was a second line of defense. And finally, the Fed could still be lender of last resort. That was a final defense.

In post-World War II America, these defenses seemed to have solved the problem of confidence and trust for good. True, there were occasional bank failures and stock market fluctuations. But these were seen as isolated events that did not impugn the system's overall integrity. Hardly anyone worried about financial panics. They seemed relics of a bygone era.

The 2008 Slump

We know now that this optimism was an illusion that helped foster the present crisis. Since the late summer of 2007, we've experienced a worldwide credit implosion that has depressed production, employment, stock prices, and confidence almost everywhere. Taking financial stability for granted, money managers, bankers, traders, government officials, and ordinary investors did things that destroyed financial stability.

The standard story of how this occurred is well-told by Ferguson, whose book was completed in mid-2008 after the housing crisis hit, and by Nobel Prize-winning Princeton economist and *New York Times* columnist Krugman, whose 1999 book was newly updated and published in December. The debacle starts with so-called "subprime" mortgages that were extended to borrowers with weak credit histories, low incomes, or both. These subprime mortgages were then bundled into various complex bonds—including "collateralized debt obligations" (CDOs)—that were sold to investors, who bought various "tranches" (or segments) of the mortgages' cash flows. Investors in the safest tranches had the first claim on mortgage payments, so they got the lowest interest rate but had the highest probability of being paid. Investors in lower tranches got just the opposite—a higher interest rate but more exposure to losses if borrowers defaulted.

The marketing of subprime loans was often sleazy. "Subprime lending hit Detroit like an avalanche of Monopoly money," writes Ferguson. "The city was bombarded with radio, television, direct-mail advertisements and armies of agents and brokers, all offering what sounded like attractive deals." Credit standards and loan documentation deteriorated. Some loans, later called NINJA—meaning borrowers had "No Income, No Job, or Assets"—were fraudulent. Still, these loans moved briskly along the financial assembly line—bankers or mortgage brokers made loans; the loans were sold to investment bankers who "securitized" them into bond-like securities; rating agencies like Moody's and Standard & Poor's graded the different tranches, allowing them to be sold to investors—banks, pensions, hedge funds—who thought they knew what they were buying.

They didn't. Ratings proved optimistic. When subprime borrowers began defaulting, a chain reaction ensued. Banks and other investors suffered large losses. To cover the losses, they had to sell other financial assets, or raise new capital. Selling other stocks and bonds drove down their prices, creating more losses for the entire system and generating a larger need for capital. In addition, many banks, investment banks, and hedge funds had relied heavily on borrowed money—"leverage," in financial jargon. At some investment banks, leverage ratios exceeded 30-to-1: there was $30 of borrowed money for every $1 of capital. As losses mounted, lenders (often other banks and investment banks) grew increasingly skittish about renewing their loans. That intensified the pressure to sell assets. The sturdiness of this jerry-built structure of interconnected loans and credits depended on trust and confidence, but trust and confidence were rapidly eroding.

Government tried to bolster confidence through injections of credit and capital. These efforts only partially succeeded. The Bush Administration engineered the rescue of the investment bank Bear Stearns in March 2008. It did not rescue Lehman Brothers in mid-September. That decision created more losses, deepening mistrust and worsening the crisis. The subsequent $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) added money to the system but not enough to restore confidence. All the financial setbacks weakened the real economy of production and jobs. Suffering huge losses on stocks and homes, American consumers curbed spending. Securitized lending for homes and vehicles fell dramatically. Other countries felt the effects through lower exports to the United States and declines in their financial markets. Global investors sold worldwide, not just in American markets.

Scapegoating the Crisis

Though complex, this "deleveraging" resembled an old-fashioned bank run. Lenders suddenly hoarded cash in the face of growing losses and threats to their own sources of credit. The usual explanations for the crisis—greed, herd behavior, and stupidity—are accurate, up to a point. All along the financial supply chain, mortgage bankers, investment bankers, and rating agencies collected hefty fees and passed the risk on to someone else. Quick profits substituted for independent judgment. Because everyone was doing it, it seemed okay. But why did all these people—many of them very smart—succumb so easily? It had been almost eight decades since a similar financial collapse had occurred. During these decades, greed, herd behavior, and stupidity hadn't taken a holiday.

The standard view is that, since the 1980s, government's relaxed regulation of financial markets had permitted reckless behavior that otherwise would have been restricted. Securitization of hedge funds and investment banks in the 1990s created a "shadow banking system"—a parallel network for channeling investment and credit—that was largely unregulated. As Krugman puts it:

> As the shadow banking system expanded to rival or even surpass conventional banking in importance, politicians and government officials should have realized that we were recreating the kind of financial vulnerability that made the Great Depression possible—and they should have responded by extending regulation and the financial safety net to cover these new institutions.

On paper, enlightened regulators might have averted the crisis. Mortgage bankers and brokers could have been prevented from making abusive, unrealistic loans. Investment banks and hedge funds could have been limited in their leverage. Rating agencies could have been better supervised. But all this is hindsight. The unstated—and unrealistic—assumption is that regulators would have spotted financial vulnerabilities that their private counterparts missed. Two bits of evidence suggest that this is wishful thinking. First, regulators didn't prevent subprime blunders at the most heavily regulated financial institutions, commercial banks. Second, regulators at the Securities and Exchange Commission were explicitly warned about the Bernie Madoff swindle and still couldn't find it.

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It's doubtful that government regulators are smarter or better informed than private bankers and investors. True, they have a different mandate and face different incentives: not profit maximization and self-enrichment, but crisis-minimization and bureaucratic power, prestige, and independence. But they are not miracle workers. Chances are that they, too, would not have defused the emerging crisis. Free-market ideology is a convenient explanation and scapegoat for the crisis. But it does not really explain what happened; Ferguson and Krugman don't get to the crux of the matter.

Mistaking Profits for Wisdom

People are conditioned by their own experiences. With hindsight, we know that investors, traders, and bankers engaged in reckless risk-taking that created economic and financial havoc. But while this dangerous speculation flourished, its participants mostly thought that the economy and financial markets had become safer. The paradox is that, believing the world was growing less risky, they took actions that made it more risky.

In some ways, their self-deception was understandable. By many indicators, the economy and financial markets seemed remarkably tranquil. Since the early 1980s, the economy had suffered only two modest recessions, those of 1990–91 and 2001, each lasting only eight months. Though job creation was sometimes sluggish, peak monthly unemployment during these decades reached only 7.8%, well below the monthly highs of the 1970s (9%) or the early 1980s (10.8%). Even after the dot-com speculation of the late 1990s and the September 11 attacks, the economy had not gone into a deep slump. The business cycle seemed tamed, if not conquered. Economists called this improvement the Great Moderation.

For Wall Street, these years were a bonanza. As interest rates dropped, investors moved into stocks. In 1982, the Dow Jones Industrial Average itself averaged 884. By 1989, this was 2,509; by 1999, 10,465. Bond prices rose, because interest rates and bond prices are mirror images: lower rates mean higher prices. In 1982, AAA-corporate bonds carried rates of nearly 14%; by 1999, they were down to 7%. On both stocks and bonds, investors earned fabulous profits, year in and year out. Falling interest rates also boosted housing prices, because buyers could afford to pay more for homes. In 1981, interest rates on 30-year fixed mortgages averaged nearly 15%; by 1999, they were down to 7%. Existing homeowners enjoyed huge windfalls in higher prices.

Everything seemed less hazardous and more predictable. In many markets, "volatility" declined. As a financial term, volatility measures typical swings in prices—of stocks, bonds, foreign exchange. Higher volatility signifies greater risk; traders don't know what prices should be. Less volatility suggests less risk. By 2004, volatility in financial markets had dropped sharply. Everyone was aware of it. Risk seemed in retreat. Governments took note. A 2006 study published by the Bank for International Settlements, whose members are government central banks, suggested that the improvement might be "permanent." The reasons included the growth of sophisticated money managers ("well informed agents") and new securities ("risk transfer instruments") that permitted more hedging. Ironically, these would later be cited as causes of the financial crisis.

If risk had retreated, then once-dangerous practices were safer. Investment banks and hedge funds could assume more leverage (which improved profitability) because volatility (threatening big losses) had declined. Lending standards for mortgages could be relaxed, because even if borrowers defaulted, the relentless rise of home prices would protect lenders against losses. Foreclosed homes could be sold for more than the value of the loan. So, all manner of adventurous behavior was rationalized. Carelessness and complacency were made respectable, even as greed and herd behavior were indulged. In Congress, Democrats pushed the giant government-created mortgage lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to expand credit for poorer borrowers. Investment houses created and marketed new securities. On Wall Street, there developed a culture of ostentatious, often obnoxious self-congratulation. Some of its wealthiest practitioners assumed airs of superior insight, mistaking profits for wisdom.

Too Much Success

What virtually everyone overlooked was that much of this bonanza was the result of good luck, not greater financial acumen. It was the consequence of falling inflation, one of the momentous (if poorly appreciated) economic events of our time. From 1979 to 1989, consumer price inflation dropped from 13.3% to 4.6%; by 2001, it was 1.6%. Interest rates followed inflation down, because rates reflect an inflationary component. Lenders want to be compensated for the erosion of their money. As rates dropped, stock prices, bond prices, and real estate prices rose; investors shifted out money from savings accounts and money market funds to stocks. Economic expansions lengthened because high inflation had been destabilizing. Consumers borrowed more and spent more, because they counted some of their new stock and housing

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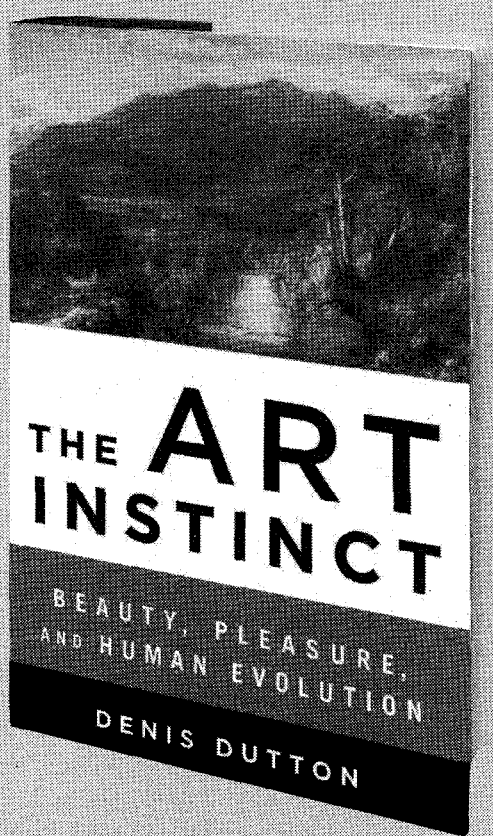
—*WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD*



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wealth as saving. Stronger consumer spending bolstered America's economy—and the world's, too, because Americans bought vast amounts of imported goods.

It is hard to argue that the defeat of double-digit inflation, engineered by Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker and President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s, was a bad thing. It was the fundamental cause of the long economic expansions of the 1980s and '90s. Falling inflation created "virtuous circles" for both financial markets and the "real economy." But, perversely, it also led to bad consequences, because its great benefits induced economic imbalances and beliefs that were ultimately self-defeating. The great profits made in financial markets gave money managers, investment bankers, and analysts an exaggerated sense of their own skills and understanding. Long expansions and shallow recessions encouraged lenders to make loans to weaker borrowers. In 2005, only 3% of subprime mortgage borrowers were in default (by late 2008, the figure was 13%).

Given the initial rise in stocks and home prices, households could borrow more. But they could not endlessly increase the ratio of their debt-to-income—which is what happened, in part because lending standards became more lax. Americans could buy more imports, but trade imbalances based on a "strong" dollar that over-priced U.S. exports and under-priced imports could not grow indefinitely without making some countries like China and Japan too export dependent. Because they were so reliant on Americans' ever-rising indebtedness to buy imports, the structure of the world economy became dangerously unstable. And the "strong dollar"—the linchpin of the entire system—would not have existed without the low inflation that buttressed faith in the dollar's purchasing power.

What this suggests is that prolonged prosperity was the underlying cause of the great financial meltdown. Too much success bred failure. Overcoming high inflation was a triumph, but the ensuing prosperity warped private behavior and public policies in ways that undermined prosperity. Money managers, lenders, and many ordinary Americans were lulled into a false sense of security, control, and optimism. So were government officials. After the dot-com bubble and 9/11, the Federal Reserve cut short-term interest rates to 1%. Such a move was possible only because the Fed was a credible anti-inflation fighter. With modest inflationary expectations, low interest rates didn't cause price increases. Cheap credit softened the recession but also exacerbated the housing bubble and financial speculation. Riskier borrowers, at home and abroad—including financial institutions—got loans. Too much trust and confidence destroyed trust and confidence.

Balancing Markets and Regulation

Modern, advanced democracies are dedicated in part to the delivery of as much prosperity as possible to as many people as possible for as long as possible. The troubling implication of the current crisis is that this promise is itself a source of instability. Behind the promise lies the presumption that economic and financial knowledge have improved sufficiently to allow governments to supervise and manage the financial system and the larger economy. We had supposedly gone beyond the era of inevitable "booms and busts." The advance in knowledge meant that governments could legitimately be held accountable for economic performance. In a general sense, this will surely continue. The promise won't be revoked, and the presumption won't be repudiated. If some policies don't succeed, others will be proposed. But the innate human tendency to overdo things suggests that the very striving for a perpetual, ever-improving prosperity creates its own booms and busts.

The present crisis is evidence of this maddening interplay. What defines today's crisis is that it originated in the behavior of households and financial markets, which came to rely on too much debt, and in the lopsided international trade imbalances that were inherently unstable. Whenever the resulting prosperity seemed threatened, government—mostly through the Federal Reserve—moved aggressively to extend and prolong it. The initial success of these policies fed the illusion that financial instability had been contained and the Great Moderation was an enduring feature of our system. As these assumptions subconsciously spread, ordinary Americans, businesses, and investors acted increasingly in ways that made the assumptions false.

The news is sobering for ideologues of all varieties. For those who place great faith in "markets," the lesson of the present crisis is that they are sometimes given to destructive instability and, though they may ultimately self-correct, the wild swings—either up or down—may involve such huge social costs that no democratically-elected government could watch passively and wait for them to play out. For those who believe in the virtues of government regulation and government intervention, the lesson is that too much intervention to produce "sustained growth" achieves at best pyrrhic victories: temporary gains from longer expansions that are followed by deeper, longer, more punishing slumps.

There is, it seems, no self-evident "happy medium," no utopian mix of market power and government power that will achieve perpetual expansion. It might be better to tolerate more frequent, milder recessions and financial setbacks than to strive for some superficially more appealing but unattainable ideal. But just what that mix would be and whether it would be politically acceptable are hard to know. The fact that so much economic activity now involves international flows of goods, services, and money compounds the difficulty. These questions have not inspired much rigorous thinking, in part because people are preoccupied by the present crisis and in part because politically attractive solutions seem hard to imagine. The financial meltdown has led to an intellectual meltdown.

Robert J. Samuelson is a columnist for Newsweek *and the* Washington Post, *and the author of* The Great Inflation and Its Aftermath: the Past and Future of American Affluence *(Random House).*

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Book Review by Victor Davis Hanson

The Ways and Means of War

Castles, Battles, and Bombs: How Economics Explains Military History,
by Jurgen Brauer and Hubert van Tuyll. University of Chicago Press, 424 pages, $29

Drawing by Elliott Banfield after Daumier, c. 1870

His mattress cost us dearly. Let's pray he'll stay asleep!

Why do men fight the way they do? Few questions are more fundamental to an understanding of military history. To begin with, simple environment and geography must explain a lot. We know why landlocked Switzerland never matched the British Navy; and why German tribesmen fought in thick hides and fur against Roman legionaries across the Rhine, rather than near-naked like tribesmen in the tropics battling European colonialists. Mass chariot tactics made sense in much of the Middle East, but less so in the tiny inland valleys among the feuding Greek city-states, where terrain was often difficult and pasture land for horses rare.

Culture accounts for far more. A centuries-long tradition of Western science, rationalism, and free markets explains in large part why, in 1519, Hernán Cortés sailed into Vera Cruz, rather than Montezuma with an Aztec imperial fleet into Barcelona. Western rationalism also explains why British redcoats were better supplied with food and ammunition in distant Zululand than were King Cetshwayo's impis in their native plains—gallant warriors who nonetheless lacked the knowhow to manufacture Martini-Henry Rifles and ocean-going ships.

Individual genius can at times influence even these larger forces. Had Philip II of Macedon lived, perhaps the Macedonian army might have invaded Persia and taken Babylon; but without the subsequent leadership of Alexander the Great it would never have gone eastward beyond Persepolis, much less ended up on the Indus River—and much less still laid the foundations of the Hellenistic World. Take away the singular mind of Napoleon, and the revolutionary French nation in arms would not have fought British, Prussian, or Russian enemies so far from the borders of an imperial France. It is hard to think of any other Northern general who would have envisioned William Tecumseh Sherman's devastating marches through Georgia and the Carolinas. The decision to send high-altitude, precision B-29 bombers on low night runs with incendiaries that would burn down the cities of Japan is difficult to conceive without the looming presence of maverick General Curtis LeMay. I think without the success of David Petraeus, Congress would have shut off funding for the Iraq War by early 2008.

Chance or pure luck on rare occasions affects the outcome of battle. Had the Japanese fighter squadrons at the battle over the Midway islands not swarmed lumbering, low-flying American Devastator torpedo bombers, unseen dozens of higher-flying Dauntless dive bombers above might never have enjoyed relatively unopposed lethal bombing runs against Japanese carriers. A number of "What If?" books speculate about what might have happened at key battles from Salamis to Gettysburg and how, had a single event transpired differently, both the battle and the war in question could have turned out far differently.

Jurgen Brauer and Hubert van Tuyll, economists at Augusta State University, grant that these various factors affect battle, but insist that their influence is secondary to the laws of economics, which are simply neglected by most military historians. *Castles, Battles, and Bombs: How Economics Explains Military History* is an all-encompassing exegesis of why military affairs turn out the way they do—an explanation that seems to trump environment, culture, individual genius, and chance. Economic

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rationalism, or rather just a few ironclad laws of economic reality, determine throughout history the nature of mass fighting. Such principles, the authors argue further, operate cross-culturally and universally across time and space, even when military thinkers and planners themselves are hardly cognizant of them.

Brauer and van Tuyll identify six basic economic principles that guide warmaking, and offer six corresponding historical examples that illustrate them at work. They warn of the arbitrariness of their narrow selection, but nonetheless shrug:

> How representative are our six cases of the larger enterprise of infusing military history with economics? We do not yet know. We do know that by selecting six economic principles, rather than just one or two, and applying them to six distinct historical epochs stretched across one thousand years of history, a time period that is ambitious to cover, we have spread the dragnet widely.

Six examples, of course, hardly qualify as "widely," but to be fair, the authors cite in passing dozens of examples that expand the frame of reference.

THEY START WITH "OPPORTUNITY COST"—or the price of passing up other viable alternatives. Historians have often been confused by the epidemic of expensive castle-building throughout much of Europe between roughly 1000 and 1300 A.D. Why did small states and clans nearly bankrupt themselves to build enormously expensive stone fortresses, often in close proximity to one another?

Usual explanations range from the nature of European political fragmentation, to irrational considerations of status and even royal vanity. But Brauer and Tuyll suggest castles made perfect economic sense—given the expensive alternative of fielding armies in such times. Without large population bases and strong central government to finance and draft manpower at will, medieval rulers found that just a few men ensconced on impregnable stone ramparts proved to be pretty cheap—and eventually justified the initial steep investments in castle construction. In the era before gunpowder, garrisons inside stone fortresses usually outlasted sieges and more numerous besiegers. In other words, when one examines all the other medieval military options, costly castles turn out to be relatively economical.

The conclusion seems persuasive if not entirely original, but one would have wished to see whether such rational calculation applies to other eras of fortification. Did the French after World War I find the Maginot Line the most logical investment of national resources given the alternatives? Or were they uniquely captive of a defensive—and in some sense irrational—mentality that grew up after Verdun, an attitude that German military thinkers escaped sufficiently to allow them to invest in Panzers and a more effective warfare of mobility? Did the Athenians invest in Attic border forts in the 4th century B.C. because it was the most economical way to protect Athenian territory, and made more economic sense than hoplite armies, cavalry, light-armed skirmishers, or navies? Or, as the losers in a 27-year-long Peloponnesian War, were they so traumatized from land invasion that fortifications seemed to be the most reassuring way to keep out any more armies advancing from Boeotia or the Peloponnese?

CHOICES IN WAR ALSO IN VARIOUS WAYS reflect expected marginal benefits and costs. In a chapter on the hired mercenaries of the Renaissance, the authors demonstrate that the so-called *condotierri* who flourished between 1300 and 1600 were not so improbable as their legendary shortcomings of small numbers, fickle allegiance, and questionable lethality suggest. Sophisticated legal contracts of service allowed small financially-strapped Italian city-states to efficiently special-order the sort of forces they needed, specifying exact weapons, numbers, and length of service. Yet again, had the authors adduced more examples of mercenary service from ancient to modern times, this exegesis of marginal benefits and costs might have seemed a more convincing explanation for the rise of mercenaries (instead of traditional considerations like economic depression, an existing pool of unemployed ex-soldiers, and promises of booty and lucre from conquest).

Between 1600 and 1800 emerging nation-states began to fight more frequent, major pitched-battle engagements, culminating in the massive campaigns of the French national armies of Napoleon. Why this growing preference for bloody pitched battles? The authors once again suggest the role of classical cost-benefit analysis that resulted in the biggest bang for the biggest buck. European states increasingly saw that, given the enormous costs of raising and deploying national armies, they could be used most efficiently to achieve dramatic political objectives through a single climactic engagement—mercenaries or fortifications could not deliver such dramatic changes of fortune.

In the American Civil War, Brauer and van Tuyll see victory in the east, in the see-saw battles between Grant and Lee following April 1864, as hinging ultimately on asymmetrical

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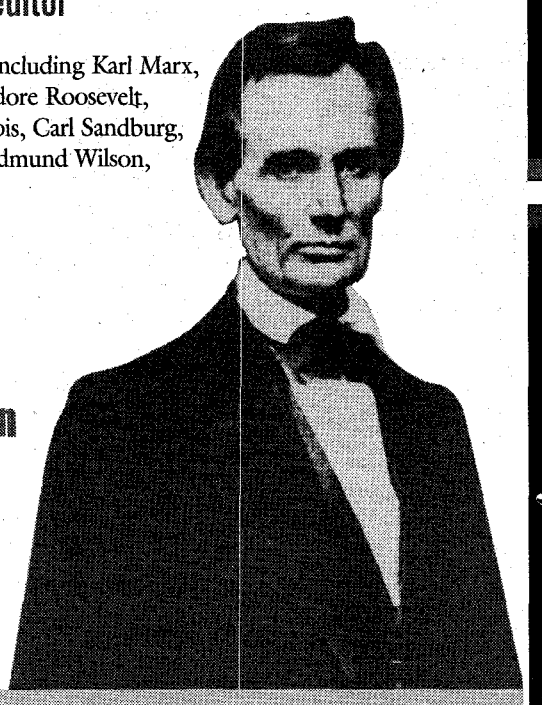

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information—or which side would eventually gain the greater knowledge of the capability and intention of the other, and then make the more informed choices. In the beginning Lee's remarkable intuition and reading of Union commanders gave the Confederates enormous advantages that made up for their inferior manpower and materiel—until Grant nullified these advantages by using greater Northern resources to invest in balloons, telegraphs, and legions of spies.

In a fifth example—of diminishing returns—the authors examine the controversial allied strategic bombing campaign against Europe. The controversy is no longer whether the British and American bombers radically reduced German military production—in fact, the total industrial output of the Third Reich increased despite the vastly increased tonnage dropped during the last two years of the war. Rather the argument rages about the degree to which Allied bombing diverted German artillery and aircraft resources, and increased production costs of relocated factories, together vastly weakening the overall German war effort. Brauer and van Tuyll, however, cast doubt on all that by citing the economic law of diminishing returns. A better way of adjudicating the question, they argue, is to emphasize the increasing allied investment in air crews and planes necessary to achieve only marginally better results. The vast resources allotted to strategic bombing resulted in only incremental and temporary reductions in Nazi industrial production, they argue, and so might have been better invested elsewhere in other services and strategies that could have resulted in comparatively far greater damage to the enemy.

Yet we are never quite told whether the problem was the idea of strategic bombing itself, or the specific obstacles inherent in carrying out the strategy with British and American bombers and tactics of the age against the Third Reich (in contrast, say, to using huge, napalm-laden B-29 superfortresses against the largely wooden, flammable, and poorly defended cities of imperial Japan). The authors hint at, but do not explore fully, the notion that the postwar reconstruction and rehabilitation of Germany may have had something to do with the fact that the shell-shocked German people, unlike at the end of World War I, knew that they had been collectively beaten and had paid a terrible price for supporting Hitler's National Socialist Party agenda.

The six case studies culminate with the French decision to produce nuclear weapons during the 1960s. This chapter serves as the classic example of the principle of substitution of capital and labor. It is a close examination of the notion that the nuclear option, by the deterrence it provided, and the international status that that accrued, supposedly was worth the diversion of enormous sums from France's conventional forces.

The authors, however, suggest that French prestige suffered more from its inability to project short-changed conventional forces in places like Algeria, Suez, and Vietnam, than it gained from stockpiling over 300 atomic bombs. France's much vaunted *force de frappe*, for all the talk of French nuclear autonomy, was mostly redundant of NATO's formidable strategic nuclear forces. Thus Charles de Gaulle's decision to build the bomb was probably unwise, since it is hard to see how French political objectives were enhanced by this exorbitant new option.

In economic terms the authors make excellent points but throughout their study it is hard to calibrate to what degree states and leaders think rationally, and to what degree their emotions, intuitions, and mistakes still prove determinative in military calculation. Like it or not, at least part of French nuclear thinking was that Europe had nearly been destroyed on two occasions in the 20th century, and France herself invaded and occupied, at least in part, by Germany three times within a 70-year period. We don't know to what degree the possession of nuclear weapons by a European continental power, along with NATO and the European transnational government, has contributed to a cessation of such violence in the subsequent 70-year interval—only that it would be insane for any European country now to invade a nuclear France. Someone from Mars might examine the past 140-year era, note the bloody first half of carnage on French soil, and then the relatively tranquil second half—and conclude that French nuclear deterrence played some role.

In their final chapter, Brauer and van Tuyll discuss how their six economic laws operate in disputes of our times, such as those about strategies to combat terrorism, the rise of military contractors, and the phasing out of the draft. Throughout their study the authors take great pains to repeat qualifiers and caveats—concerning the arbitrariness of their historical examples, the possibility that more than a mere six economic laws determines military practices, and the role of other irrational determinants in warfare. The result is a curious mixture, perhaps best summed up in their concession: "economic rationalism is mostly behind apparently inexplicable military decisions—but we would not wish to rule out other considerations as well."

Although *Castles, Battles, and Bombs* can at times be dry reading, and the authors sometimes emphasize economic rationalism at the expense of age-old Thucydidean considerations like honor, fear, and apparent self-interest, they are to be congratulated for adding an imaginative, logical, and hitherto mostly ignored explanation for the apparent irrationality of wars and warmaking. When they apply their theories to the present, Brauer and van Tuyll take much of the emotion and partisanship out of contemporary discussions, showing how many controversial choices are in fact guided by economic necessities rather than supposedly shallow and bad men.

Victor Davis Hanson is the author of Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power *(Doubleday),* Ripples of Battle: How Wars of the Past Still Determine How We Fight, How We Live, and How We Think *(Doubleday), and is currently a senior fellow in classics and military history at the Hoover Institution.*

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Book Review by Andrew C. McCarthy

Riddle of the Sands

A Path Out of the Desert: A Grand Strategy for America in the Middle East,
by Kenneth M. Pollack. Random House, 592 pages, $30

The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East,
by Olivier Roy. Columbia University Press, 160 pages, $24.95

Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East,
by Gilles Kepel. The Belknap Press, 336 pages, $27.95

None of George W. Bush's alleged treacheries more riles leftists than that, on the international stage, he was one of them. For his dreamy Wilsonian trouble, he was savaged mercilessly, the Left having ceased to see the wisdom in democracy evangelism, military adventures, and edgy security tactics once the Clinton Administration closed shop.

Bush's exodus was marked by historically low approval ratings, his party ejected from power after successive electoral routs. Yet, as the heat of campaign cant gave way to the cold reality of governing, President Barack Obama retained his predecessor's defense secretary while filling other top posts with Iraq invasion supporters and democratization devotees. "Progressives" are painting new lipstick on the enlightened interventionism they've spent the last several years deriding as a pig. And so the rush is on to reclaim Woodrow Wilson from the Bush legacy. The problem, it turns out, was not the ambitious project to remake the Muslim Middle East. It's just that the noble effort was horribly implemented by incompetent, moralistic dullards who never really believed in it and who, in their arrogant disregard for the rule of law, came to mirror the terrorists they were fighting.

That is the collective story of three new books addressing post-Bush Middle East policy. Of these, the most comprehensive is Brookings Institution scholar Kenneth Pollack's *A Path Out of the Desert*—an ironic title given the author's plea that Americans take up permanent residency in the desert...and bring along their wallets.

For years, Pollack was a Persian Gulf analyst at the CIA and the Clinton-era National Security Council. His oeuvre includes *The Threatening Storm* (2002), which meticulously laid out the case for regime change and democracy promotion in Iraq. The ensuing misadventure has not changed his mind. But as a thoughtful, self-described "liberal internationalist," he appreciates the deep economic, political, and social dysfunction of the Middle East. He admits his new "grand strategy," called "enabling reform," will be the work of decades. His great regret is that Bush's missteps have sapped the national will required for so daunting a commitment.

He is right to worry. For all the considerable energy he expends cataloguing small distinctions, Pollack's enabling reform is not all that different from Bush's democratization gambit. Like Bush, Pollack strains to absolve Islam from any relation to terrorism—though he admits the threat has an Islamic "flavor," inasmuch as it is driven primarily by Salafi "Islamists" who "create a superficial impression" of a connection to Islam. He recommends that terrorism and the sometimes related (and sometimes not) Islamism be addressed by better governance in authoritarian states. So, the thinking goes, security in America hinges on democratic reform in the

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Middle East. Because the unpopularity of Bush initiatives predicated on just these assumptions is so palpable, Pollack is at pains to distance his "reform." Alternately, he denies the "myth" that democracy promotion played "a dominant role in Bush policy," and then disparages the former president's "forward strategy of freedom" as though it were central to the whole mess.

Bush, who campaigned against Clintonian nation-building in 2000, is described as having reluctantly hijacked the strategy under duress. Democratization, Pollack recounts, was really the brain-child of Clinton "neoliberals." Though it inspired a few well-meaning Bush "moderates," the administration's real insiders—the "radical Right"—were not brought around until weapons of mass destruction failed to materialize in Iraq and they found themselves in need of a justification for the mounting casualties. At sea with a good idea they didn't really grasp, Bush operatives blew it—failing to live up to the second inaugural's "magnificent" rhetoric of reform, rushing elections prematurely to the advantage of terrorist groups like Hamas (in the Palestinian territories) and Hezbollah (in Lebanon), and so forth.

One would never know it was Pollack's old boss who midwifed the first Palestinian elections, turning Clinton White House fixture Yasser Arafat into a "democrat" just in time for the second intifada. Pollack is right that democracy promotion assumed greater urgency when the principal rationale for invading Iraq cratered. But as those of us who never bought the strategy can attest (and as Norman Podhoretz, a strong proponent, has documented in the pages of *Commentary*), democratization was an arrow in the post-9/11 quiver from the start: a core component, albeit not the top goal, of the plans in both Afghanistan and (over a year later) Iraq.

Quibbles about the depth of Bush's conviction aside, Pollack's main complaint is that the policy was pursued incompetently and "on the cheap." This, too, rings hollow after years of relentless Democratic caterwauling about Iraq's exorbitant costs: over $700 billion in direct expenditures (recently estimated by another former Clinton adviser, Joseph Stiglitz, to top $3 trillion in real costs). Obama spent the 2008 campaign wailing that this spending should have gone to education, health care, New Orleans, and countless other higher priorities. Even if the author is right that Bush was ham-handed, and some profligacy is thus chalked off to erratic implementation, one shudders at what Pollack must think funding levels ought to be.

And make no mistake, Pollack is talking about an enormous financial commitment. His strategy would invest government's full run of resources—including the armed forces if necessary—in the hope of very gradual transformation in the Mideast. The plan would provide financial aid to create diverse markets and entrepreneurship, and it envisions a dramatic overhaul of the region's woeful education systems. It calls for increased foreign aid to places like Egypt, where our $2 billion annual ante has not been upped in 20 years. (Even as he recommends more funding for Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship, Pollack suggests withholding a slice to create human-rights pressure—but such sticks, as the Bush Administration learned, turn brittle the second we need the Egyptians to do something, which is often.)

Pollack forthrightly asks, "Is all of this really necessary?" His argument presumes that the Muslim Middle East is amenable to real democratization and that such reform there would translate into security here. On these points he is unconvincing. He is adamant that "Islamists," the "political Islam" they purvey, and the terrorists with whom many of them make common cause must be distinguished from "Islam," the belief system of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims. Fair enough. But he ignores reality in portraying Islam as an exclusively positive force, fully compatible with democracy.

Along the way, he indulges multiple misconceptions. Contrasting America's government with Japan's (among others), he deduces that because democracy comes in many forms its fundamentals must be endlessly malleable. He then lists those fundamentals—"speech and assembly, representative government, transparency, accountability, rule of law, checks and balances within government, and limits on governmental power...." Noticeably absent are freedom of conscience and legal equality between sexes and between sects. As our own national experience shows, these principles are a *sine qua non* of real democracy, and they run decidedly against the grain of Islamic culture. On this Pollack is silent, or he falls back on the familiar cop-out that because most Muslims are moderate, Islam must also be. He clings to the fallacy that because millions of Muslims live in democracies, Islam must be democracy-friendly—even though it has no democratic tradition, Muslims are minorities in most democracies he mentions, and where they are the majority (in Indonesia and Turkey) freedom is currently under assault.

This cheery view leads the author to the still more tenuous claim that Islamists are largely benign and should be drawn into the electoral process despite what he admits is the danger that, once in power, they might well undermine the political reforms that got them there. Pollack certainly does his credibility no favor by his astounding reliance on condemnations of the 9/11 attacks by such Islamic authorities as Muslim Brotherhood mouthpiece Sheikh Yussef al-Qaradawi ("one of the most well-known religious scholars in the Arab world"). Pollack airbrushes from his portrait Qaradawi's fatwas approving the murder of Americans in Iraq and suicide bombings in Israel, as well as his role as chief agitator in the notorious global rioting over Danish cartoons depicting Mohammed.

In *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East*, renowned French scholar Olivier Roy provides a more detached critique of the Bush policy. A short volume, it is long on hyperbole—e.g., that Iraq is a hopeless, neoconservative-driven catastrophe that has left American counterterrorism in tatters. The argument seems more ill-considered with the passage of time: quite apart from the fact that many highly knowledgeable, non-neocon experts (like Kenneth Pollack) supported removing Saddam Hussein, Iraq has receded from controversy precisely because al-Qaeda has been thoroughly routed there and Baghdad's fledgling government is ambling, fitfully, toward stability (though obviously one can debate whether the final product will justify the cost).

Roy diagnoses what he regards as the fatal flaws of neoconservatism: it is "universalist, Wilsonian and anti-culturalist." He infers that neocons perforce reject Samuel Huntington's clash-of-civilizations theory. Though they surely do, his premises are counterfactual as applied to Iraq and Afghanistan. So sensitive to Iraqi culture was the State Department's democracy-promotion effort that the new Iraqi constitutions were permitted to establish Islam as the state religion and enshrine sharia as a principal source of law—and were adopted only after the ardently sought approbation of religious authorities (such as Ayatollah Ali Sistani). The author has a point, though, when he argues that such cultural solicitude remains at a competitive disadvantage against Islamists and "neofundamentalists" (Roy's term, comprising the Taliban and Somalia's Islamic Courts Union). These groups are rooted in the local culture, address tribal conflicts by appealing to sharia, have a better reputation for fighting corruption than do more secular factions, and appeal to the locals' virulent anti-Americanism (which Roy, correctly, sees as a major neocon blind spot).

Like Pollack, Roy has a nuanced view of Islamists. Islamism, he pronounces, is merely the "political ideologisation of Islam...which has nothing to do with terrorism." Thus he construes Islamist Hamas and Hezbollah, despite their mass-murder tactics, as regional, political movements—as distinguished from the "pure" terrorism of al-Qaeda, which by his lights is es-

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sentially anarchist: targeting the "system" but bereft of "concrete objectives."

But Roy's analysis is blind to al-Qaeda's jihadist doctrine, which has very concrete objectives (viz., to end American hegemony and establish a regional, expanding, and ultimately global caliphate), and the charters and rhetoric of Hamas and Hezbollah, who self-identify with global jihadism and whose designs transcend Lebanon and "Palestine." Only by downplaying their resort to terror can he rationalize negotiating with Hamas and Hezbollah (we need their help against al-Qaeda, he says), and chastise Americans for childishly "moralizing" counterterrorism, allegedly at the expense of strategic thinking.

FINALLY, *BEYOND TERROR AND MARTYRDOM* IS a time-warped contrivance of the French Arabist Gilles Kepel. His overarching concept is that Bush's quest for "universal democracy" was a "transformative fiction" mirroring al-Qaeda's dream of a "universal Islamist state." The two sides have even pursued their respective utopias through violent force, all the while betraying their core principles—al-Qaeda traducing the true Islam, Bush shredding American values.

Here the reader finds the angry Left's Bush mythology in full, beginning with the "original sin" of Guantanamo Bay, the legal black-hole where innocents are consigned without due process. In actuality, obsessed with keeping life-saving intelligence under wraps, the Bush Administration failed, to its great disadvantage, to highlight Gitmo's positive security contribution. In the void, human-rights activists dictated the narrative and the public was left in the dark about the jihadist training and connections of the detained combatants (until the diligent work of journalists Thomas Joscelyn and Benjamin Wittes brought the information to light). Yet in Kepel's fevered imagination, Gitmo was deliberately designed for a very public role: "to symbolize the defeat of terrorists worldwide." Kepel doesn't let the facts interfere with a good story.

Like Roy's readers, Kepel's will be left clueless about the turnaround in Iraq over the last two years. Stuck in 2006, the author is still pining about Bush's rejection of the ballyhooed Iraq Study Group report, which proposed negotiations with Iran and pressure on Israel as keys to success—and was rendered instantly irrelevant by the successful "surge" in combat forces. (The name David Petraeus does not appear in Kepel's opus.)

More edifying is the author's commentary on the European scene. He offers an interesting analysis of the controversy over Pope Benedict's 2006 speech at Regensburg. In urging the galvanizing role of reason in faith, the pontiff cited a 14th-century Byzantine emperor's castigation of Mohammed, the warrior prophet, for having spread Islam by the sword. Kepel uses the incident to sketch, with cautious optimism, a current in moderate Islamic thought: 38 *ulema* who undertook to rebut the Holy Father in a congenial reply that assumed shared principles and was expressed logically.

Kepel is effective, moreover, in deconstructing multiculturalism and the social "pillarization" to which it leads. He contends that France has been successful in assimilating Europe's largest immigrant Muslim population, while Britain, Spain, and the Netherlands have lagged behind in integrating their Muslims, who are therefore prone to support terrorism. To carry this argument, Kepel must go to great lengths to interpret rioting by Muslims in the French *banlieues* as an exclusively economic, rather than even partially religio-cultural, phenomenon.

He has convinced himself, at any rate, that Islam will go Europe, not the other way around. For Kepel, the combination of human capital drawn from across the Mediterranean and European expertise is driving "an ever changing process of fascination and rejection, where friendship and enmity mingle in the register of intimacy." His prediction is that this emerging economic dynamo will be the "alternative to the failed narratives of jihad and the war on terror." It's a happy ending, but is it true?

Andrew C. McCarthy is a senior fellow at the National Review Institute and a contributing editor at National Review.

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Book Review by Robert R. Reilly

Thinking Like a Terrorist

Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century, by Marc Sageman.
University of Pennsylvania Press, 208 pages, $24.95

The Mind of Jihad, by Laurent Murawiec.
Cambridge University Press, 352 pages, $80 (cloth), $24.99 (paper)

Terrorism studies have been a growth industry and in this field there is a great temptation, for obvious reasons, to explain the problem of terrorism in terms amenable to a policy solution. No one wants to admit to the possibility of an irresolvable problem. As a result, a great deal of nonsense has been perpetrated about the "root causes" of terrorism, especially concerning the Islamic world.

Marc Sageman is a forensic psychiatrist who has done yeoman's work in clearing away the debris of various phony "root causes." In his new book, *Leaderless Jihad*, he uses his empirical research involving some 500 terrorists to debunk the soothing notions that terrorism is caused by poverty, lack of education, sexual deprivation, psychological problems, or lack of economic opportunity. Clearly, these were not the causes for the men whom he studied. Compared to their confreres, they were better educated, wealthier, and often married with children. Sageman makes this part of his case convincingly, with dispatch and some good humor. This is important work because policies based upon the erroneous assumption that any of these is the root cause will be ineffective or perhaps even harmful.

Several years ago, I attended a briefing by Sageman in which he laid out the research behind his observation, included in this book, that terrorist networks are composed of people who have other prior associations, familial or social, that most likely brought them into the network in the first place. Networks are not an aggregation of atomized individuals. He provided a schematized map of all the personal interconnections between the operatives in the Madrid bombing. It looked like several overlaid spider webs of various sizes. The map also demonstrated how "jihad" could be relatively "leaderless," because of the decentralized, non-hierarchical nature of the network. Sageman's approach was impressive in that it appeared to offer the real possibility of developing actionable intelligence. This is, no doubt, why he has been called upon by the government as a counter-terrorism consultant. At its best, this book, written in a lucid style, is full of common sense, buttressed by his research.

Alas, things go askew when Sageman attempts to find the "root cause" of global Islamist

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terrorism by conducting a ground up exploration of his sample of terrorists. "Ground up" means that he concentrates on the foot soldiers, and tries to draw his conclusions from his observations of them. By doing so, I am afraid he has gotten lost in the weeds. His approach leads him to the extraordinarily misguided conclusion that terrorism is not "the result of the beliefs and perceptions held by terrorists." Also, we hear that "terrorists rarely execute their operations as a direct result of their doctrines...." Why, then, do they do it? Speaking of terrorists in North America and Western Europe, Sageman tells us that they "were not intellectuals or ideologues, much less religious scholars. It is not about how they think, but how they feel." Anyone *feel* like some terrorism?

TERRORISM IS NOT SIMPLY TERROR—SOME people doing terrible things on the spur of the moment. It is murder advanced to the level of a moral principle, which is then institutionalized in an organization—a cell, a party, or a state—as its animating principle. The very first thing one must understand is the ideology incarnated in the terrorist organization; it is the source of its moral legitimacy. Without it, terrorism cannot exist.

In the case of radical Islamism, the trinity of thinkers behind its Salafi ideology is Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Banna, and Maulana Mawdudi. Qutb was an Egyptian thinker and writer, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood who was hanged by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1966 and is widely regarded as the intellectual father of Islamic fundamentalism. Hassan al-Banna was another Egyptian, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 and presided over its rapid growth in the 1930s and '40s; he was assassinated in 1949, probably by the Egyptian secret service. Maulana Mawdudi is the Pakistani founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, who died in the United States in the 1970s, but whose Islamist writings influenced millions from the 1920s onward, including Qutb and al-Banna.

Sageman is clearly acquainted with Salafi thinking, but he mentions Qutb only twice, al-Banna once, and Mawdudi not at all. This is somewhat like trying to divine the reasons for a war by observing the soldiers in the trenches, rather than by referring back to the respective principles for which the two sides are fighting. How much of the Nazi ideology could one have come to understand by interviewing German soldiers at the Battle of the Bulge?

When I challenged Sageman concerning this at his lecture, he told me that Sayyid Qutb was not relevant because the people in his case studies did not read him. Very likely they did not (though the locus for the London subway bombers was an Islamist bookstore that no doubt offered his works). But that is no more relevant than saying that the rank and file of the Nazi party had not read Alfred Rosenberg or Nietzsche. It did not matter if they had not. They were nonetheless under the control of a regime animated by the ideology based on the ideas of such thinkers. The regime formed them. Surely the Nazis pouring forth from the Nuremberg rallies were motivated by and full of "feelings," but it is not these feelings that explain them or Nazism.

What is significant is that the Nazi party was able to foist its perverted explanation of reality on the culturally most highly developed civilization in Europe. That ideology somehow meshed with the dysfunctional society of the Weimar republic. Today, the real fear, one shared by Sageman, is that the Islamist ideology will likewise find a much larger audience in the Muslim world, thus creating a situation far more serious than the one we face today. That is why the "war of ideas" is so important in this struggle and why we must understand the ideas of Qutb and other leading Islamist ideologists.

Unfortunately, Sageman's orientation leads him to some foolish policy prescriptions, such as that we should criminalize terrorism and demilitarize the war on terror. But treating terror only as a police problem is what got us into this mess in the first place. And so long as we confront *state* sponsors of terrorism, a subject completely absent from Sageman's book, we would be wise to ignore his advice on the military.

THE PROBLEM OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM must be addressed at the level at which it exists. Terrorists are produced by a totalitarian ideology justifying terrorism. That is its "root cause." With respect to the war of ideas, Laurent Murawiec's book, *The Mind of Jihad*, is everything that Sageman's is not. In a remark that could be directed at Sageman, Murawiec says in his introduction that many analysts "not only lose sight of the mind holding the weapon, but they ignore the mind moving the minds: 'the mind of jihad.'" This, then, is the book for those who wish to explore the "root cause" in the ideas that give moral legitimacy to Islamist terrorism.

Murawiec, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, does far more than survey the thoughts of Qutb, Mawdudi, and al-Banna, valuable and essential as that is. He goes into the nature of ideology itself. Here he is aided by the scholarship of Eric Voegelin, which helps him diagnose Islamism as a spiritual pathology. The seminal books of Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (1958), and Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957), help Murawiec see the typology of such pathologies in Gnosticism and in the violent millenarian movements of the Middle Ages. Once this typology is laid out, the reader is more easily able to see what is operating in the Islamist ideology today.

One is reminded of the remarks of the then-Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, when he wrote in his book on *Eschatology* (1977):

> The rejection of chiliasm (Joachim of Flora, the idea that history will produce a Kingdom of God on earth) means that the Church repudiated the idea of a definitive intra-historical fulfillment, an inner, intrinsic perfectibility of history. The Christian hope knows no idea of an inner fulfillment of history. On the contrary, it affirms the impossibility of an inner fulfillment of the world.

Murawiec does not use this quote, but it expresses a motif of much of his work. He not only refers several times to Joachim of Flora (the medieval millenarian, much discussed by Voegelin), but shows the idea of intra-historical perfectibility to be the same essential spiritual disorder in the West as in the East. He also sees that the secular and theological variants of totalitarianism are essentially the same because of this, and because they are both based on some version of pure will as the principal constituent of reality.

Murawiec uncovers some of the roots of Islamism in Islam itself. Owing to the spade work he has done in Gnosticism and Christian millenarianism as the foundation of modern totalitarianism, however, he can also convincingly draw the connection between modern radical Islamism and 20th-century Western totalitarian movements. They are not simply moving parallel to each other. In fact, they have enjoyed a good deal of ideological cross-pollination and some real working connections. This is not news in respect to Nazism and Hitler's favorite mufti, Amin al-Husayni. But Murawiec's research into the working relationship between the Soviet Union and Islamism is original and startling. By itself, it is worth the price of the book.

IN A WORK THIS AMBITIOUS, THE READER MAY not find everything convincing. For instance, I think Murawiec overstretches in trying to relate the Arabic tribal "truth" as immanent and therefore relative, with the voluntaristic metaphysics of al-Ashari, the 10th-century Sunni theologian, which gives Allah the privilege of defining good and evil according to his whim. No Muslim would claim the privilege. In terms of the larger argument, there are those who say that nothing outside of Islam is required to understand Islamism. It is simply Islam *redivivus*. They will not be persuaded by those, like Murawiec,

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who say Islamism is Islam infected by Western totalitarian ideology.

I tend toward the Murawiec side. One cannot read Mawdudi, for instance, without being struck by the Leninist rhetoric. In fact, his writings are inconceivable without Western totalitarian ideology. Islamism definitely has a new element in it. It should be no surprise that, in its political manifestation, the Islamist project duplicates the features of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century's secular ideologies and of Socrates' proto-totalitarian city in Plato's *Republic*. "In such a state," said Mawdudi, "no one can regard any field of his affairs as personal and private. Considered from this aspect the Islamic state bears a kind of resemblance to the Fascist and Communist states." It is, he remarked, "the very antithesis of secular Western democracy." Al-Banna regarded the Soviet Union under Stalin as the model of a successful one-party system, which the Islamists were seeking. In a line worthy of Robespierre, Qutb said that this "just dictatorship" would "grant political liberties to the virtuous alone." This, of course, does not mean that Islam was irenic before these Western influences were felt, and one has to understand why Islam was susceptible to them in the first place.

Murawiec's book sparkles with insights and is studded with very valuable citations of Islamist ideologues, but it is, in a way, almost too crammed with material, not all of it sufficiently related to the main theme. Sometimes, the ideas seem to topple on to each other. Perhaps I have this impression because I first encountered *The Mind of Jihad* in a larger two-volume version put out by the Hudson Institute. This edition from Cambridge conflates the two volumes, and cuts some material. It has rearranged not only the chapters but material within chapters. I cannot say it is an improvement. Some of the sloppiness shows in footnotes carried over from the Hudson editions that refer back to a first volume. Chapter two ends by announcing that the book will next address the subject of Gnosticism as it appeared historically, when that is exactly what the last chapter has done.

Nonetheless, *The Mind of Jihad* takes the discussion precisely in the direction in which it needs to go if we are to understand and prevail in this new war of ideas. By seeing Islamist jihad for what it is—an expression of a pseudo-religion and false reality—we can both ascertain the sources of its strength and divine its vulnerabilities. If we understand the enemy, we are a long way toward winning this war. Then all we have to do is understand ourselves.

Robert R. Reilly is a senior fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council and author of the forthcoming book, The Closing of the Muslim Mind *(ISI Books).*

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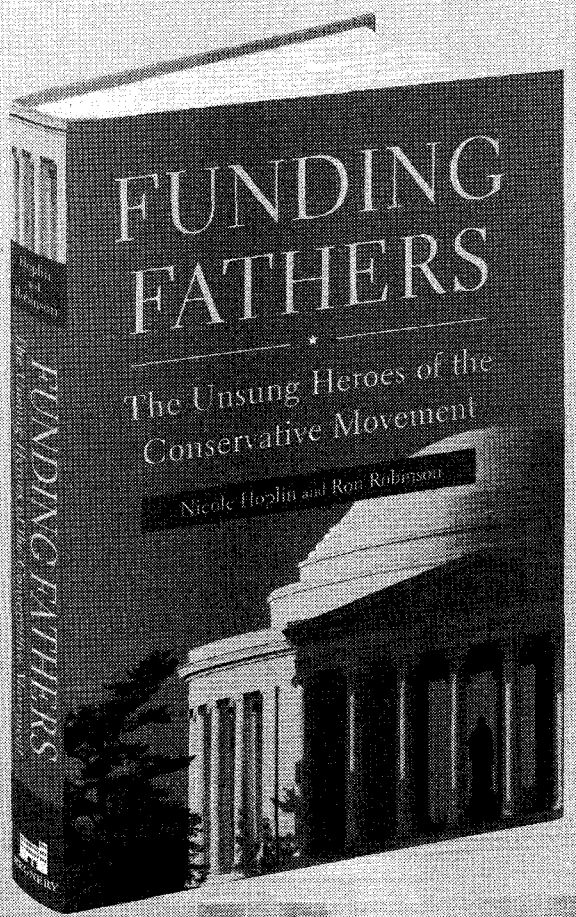

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A Tender Salute and Pleasant Reply

by Mark Helprin

My *Claremont Review of Books* essay "Decision in the West" (Winter 2008/09), while recognizing the Bush Administration's prevention of further organized attacks upon American soil as a great accomplishment, took both parties to task, as I have done frequently, for weakening the national security. This equal-opportunity criticism engendered an instantaneous reaction from Peter Wehner, former deputy assistant to George W. Bush, in a blog for *National Review Online* and, as "Fisking Mark Helprin," emailed in Clinton-war-room style to seemingly everyone in possession of a computer.

I am a small subject, and the war is a big subject, but a large part of the defense of the Bush war strategy offered by Mr. Wehner was directed pointlessly at me, *ad hominem*, in prose sometimes illuminated by flashes of brilliant vacancy and in conjunction with the magical proof that the war in Iraq is being won, in a decent interval, and with inconsequential damage to our strategic position. How could one possibly disagree, as I did, with such a happy conclusion? While charitably lamenting my fall, Wehner goes on to explain the errors of my ways.

To begin, I am guilty of "very sloppy writing," although he may have in mind someone else, as he often refers to me by two different names in the same paragraph, and, unless he is ignorant of antecedent agreement (which, knowing what sloppy writing is, he would not be), believes that I delivered President Bush's second inaugural address. (For the record, I didn't.)

My sloppiness is all of a piece, because after all it was I who wrote the 1996 Republican presidential nominee's acceptance speech, which "was a bust, and helped contribute to Dole's loss to Bill Clinton." As if anticipating this statement and perhaps addressing Mr. Wehner himself, Norman Podhoretz, his ally in the war debate, wrote that the speech was "amazing...astonishing...sublime...the most distinguished political oration anyone had delivered in America in a very long time," with "language of such beauty and eloquence" that its "luminous phrases continued leaping out and lighting up the rhetorical landscape," and

> raised our political discourse to a literary level higher than it has ever reached before in the living memory of even those of us who share with [Dole] 'the gracious compensations of age.' And for thus enhancing and indeed ennobling our public life with words of exceptional loveliness and images of great richness and coherence... [it] was rewarded with a Philistine indifference that shames us as a nation and that tells us something more disheartening about the corruption of taste and the erosion of standards in America [and about Peter Wehner] than all the lowest and most vulgar excrescences of pop culture put together.

I am capable, it seems, of misjudging victory, sloppy writing, and the composition of bustful speeches, because I suffer a corrosive envy for the elect who have worked in the Bush White House, the very epicenter of victory. Of my uniquely individual notice of President Bush's ineloquence, we have: "Reading between the lines, his use of the word 'eloquently' probably translates into 'we need more speeches written by Mark Halperin [*sic*]."

No we don't. Not in my view anyway, which is that we need no more speeches written by me ever again. I came to this conclusion about five years ago, and will no longer write for anyone else. Until Bob Dole blew my cover, my direct involvement in politics and policy was covert. Over several decades, I had indeed written speeches. What Mr. Wehner cannot know, despite his careless declaration of probabilities, is that I did this (like jury duty) solely as a painful obligation of citizenship; turned down policy positions in the White House, Senate, and elsewhere; insisted upon anonymity; never received a penny; and never once wrote a speech except to express a policy or policies that I myself had formulated. How careless and revelatory that Wehner claims to know my mind. I would not claim to know his, even though the territory to be mapped would require only a short overflight.

In connection with my judgment that the Bush goal of ending tyranny in the world was perhaps a tad overambitious, with a palsied finger upon the trigger Wehner says, "Helprin either didn't read the speech from which he quotes, or he willfully misrepresented it." This is a serious charge, of which he is confident because he believes that I was referring to "the President's [*sic*] second inaugural address, in which he said: 'So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. This is not primarily the task of arms....'"

Actually, I did read the speech and did not represent it, willfully or otherwise, as it was a different speech. To wit, the State of the Union Address of January 31, 2006, in which the president said, "Abroad, our nation is committed to an [*sic*] historic, long-term goal: we seek the end of tyranny in our world." But even in regard to the first utterance, my criticism—that this is a grandiose project in any context and certainly for a country that has been unable to accomplish more limited versions of it in Korea, Vietnam, and, as we shall see, some primitive countries in the Middle East—remains valid, and is not vitiated by the qualification (sometimes offered and sometimes not) that the task is not primarily of arms. Most of our recent forays in this utopian direction have been spasms of arms, and the fact that war is in large part political is neither newly discovered nor excuses an incapacity to frame reasonable objectives.

I am taken to task for being "persistently unwilling to accept that Iraq is a democracy," and "on the matter of reforging the political culture of the Arabs: that, too, is happening." If Iraq is a democracy because it has held elections, then so was the Soviet Union. Under pressure from the United States, Iraq is unenthusiastically pretending to be a democracy while it remains a forced confederation of three homogenous and mutually hostile religious and/or ethnic communities that will not and cannot be brought together contentedly. Nor could our 140,000 troops plus Karen Hughes have been even vaguely—even microscopically—successful in changing the political culture of the several hundred million Arabs, a culture so deeply entwined with religion as to make such an effort not only entirely useless but also remarkably incendiary.

My opinion is based not on thoughtless partisan tropisms but on more than 40 years

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involvement in the question, a careful reading of history, academic training with the leading scholars and historians of the Middle East, and service in deserts, mountains, and villages of the region, speaking the languages and walking around at night with a machine gun in pursuit of the people relevant to this argument, whose character I was most vividly induced to assess. And, my opinion aside, when one's decisions may spill the blood of one's countrymen, as a general rule facts are better than dreams.

Jumping over to China, Mr. Wehner objects to my assertions, expressed in these pages and elsewhere, that we have reconfigured our forces so as poorly to prepare them for a conflict with—rather than guerillas—nations capable of naval operations, offensive and defensive air war, and battle in heavy formation. He accuses me of perhaps wanting "to build a massive army the size of China's...while China was simultaneously transforming (lightening) their [*sic*] military to look more like the one Rumsfeld was building." This might be a good point except for the fact that the military China is building is like the one Rumsfeld was tossing away. China lies across the Pacific. We can face it only on the sea and in the air. Despite this, President Bush built fewer ships than even his fun-loving predecessor who "d[id]n't speak to the military." The initial requirement for the F-22, America's best and vitally necessary air dominance aircraft, was 750. By the end of the Bush presidency, the Air Force found itself fighting a rearguard action to preserve 183. That's not transformation, it's decimation.

There are many similar examples of the decline and neglect of America's fighting capacity, for which "transformation" does not and cannot compensate. Shown in this regard the little difference between Presidents Clinton and Bush, the electorate may reasonably have foreseen no penalty in choosing in 2008 a Democrat over a Republican, depriving the Republican Party of the core issues of national security. As cover for plain incompetence, blind partisan loyalty usually brings an equal measure of electoral repudiation and defeat, which is what happened.

I HAVE NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE INCLINATION to answer Mr. Wehner's every slipshod and accusative particularity. I will, however, address his thesis, which is that the war has been well fought and a success.

With control of the air, heavy weapons, and a spectacular battlefield picture, there was and will be virtually no tactical engagement in Iraq that we did not or cannot win. The much vaunted increase in troop numbers—which the president's critics had for a long time advocated to entirely deaf ears—was proportionally quite small. Meanwhile, we left a large part of Iraq, took 3,500 vehicles off the roads every month via internal supply flights, increased air strikes by 400%, iterated a schedule for withdrawal, and armed the people whom we had been fighting since 2003. (We did not do this, by the way, to the *Wehrmacht*.) We will leave a government friendly to Iran and hostile to American interests in the Middle East. It will not be democratic insofar as its people vote, as they do almost invariably, only to confirm existing communal loyalties. The country has not in its modern history been able to resist dissolution except by the agency of foreign armies or indigenous oppression, and during the American sojourn not a single element of the fundamental dynamic has been addressed except by military means that quickly evaporate or by good wishes that are little more than blown kisses.

Staying and leaving have been and will be equally destructive to America's substantive and psychological deterrent power. The new orientation of our deeply eroded forces ill-prepares them for the future while it simultaneously invites rising states to sprint ahead where we have faltered. Because the Bush apparatus was able neither to comprehend the political element of war nor to frame workable war aims, it set itself a constantly adjusted series of impossible tasks while ignoring the domestic time limits and cost/benefit calculations of an electorate that finally substituted for an administration with the will but not the wit to fight, one with neither.

Had we approached the war differently—as variously proposed privately and in public—we might have avoided the loss of countless lives, strengthened our overall strategic position, preserved and augmented our military power, achieved our essential defensive objectives, avoided polarization at home, and failed to encourage the hostile nations that President Obama now carefully appeases.

Invited to print his piece in its entirety in the *CRB*, Mr. Wehner refused unless granted the last word, which he claimed he would have elsewhere anyway. But neither he nor I will have the last word, as it belongs to the facts, which will come clear in good time if they have not already. Fact is a rock that will not be washed away in torrents of self-serving cognitive dissonance. Meanwhile, I don't want the last word but only, I hope, the best word.

Mark Helprin, whose novels include Winter's Tale *(Harcourt),* A Soldier of the Great War *(Harcourt), and* Freddy and Fredericka *(Penguin Press), writes the regular "Parthian Shot" column for the* Claremont Review of Books.

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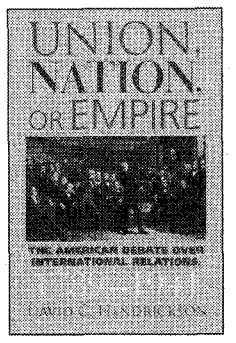

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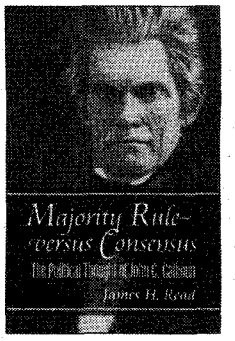

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Book Review by Kenneth Minogue

The Iron Lady

"There Is No Alternative": Why Margaret Thatcher Matters,
by Claire Berlinski. Basic Books, 400 pages, $27.95

Is history the story of great men? This was a question faced by Claire Berlinski in one of her examination papers when she studied for a Ph.D in Oxford, and any Marxist could effortlessly write many pages refuting the idea. Currently the British government has decreed, in accordance with that rather Marxist paradigm, that history taught in British schools will be "themed." It will be about abstractions such as slavery, medicine, and war. The fact is, however, that the very beginning of historical understanding is chronology and contingency—dates and details. "Theming" the past turns it into bad sociology. And it happens that Berlinski's new book, *"There Is No Alternative": Why Margaret Thatcher Matters*, concerns a passage of international events that can hardly be understood except in "great man" terms—at least if we can ignore the fussing feminist who may object to our treating "man" here as generic rather than specific.

In the 1980s, a remarkable conjunction of events changed the then dominant international relations of the Cold War. A number of leaders came into office who happened to be quite different both from their predecessors and their successors. John O'Sullivan's *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister* (2006) has brilliantly argued one version of this thesis, in which the personalities were Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II, and Margaret Thatcher. Mikhail Gorbachev always threatened to ruin the symmetry of O'Sullivan's argument because he was clearly a pivotal player in the process. In Berlinski's Thatcher-centered version, the pope drops out and Gorbachev comes in.

Berlinski's book is part narrative history, part conversation with the people who could throw light on Margaret Thatcher—people such as Thatcher's press secretary Sir Bernard Ingham, advisers such as Charles Powell, and opponents such as Neil Kinnock, who faced her for many years over the dispatch box at Question Time in the Commons. The book begins with some of the clichés of current journalism—a woman in a man's world, the grocer's daughter from a nowhere place called Grantham, the English class system. None of them bothered Thatcher: rather, they tempered the Iron Lady's mettle. Berlinski's book improves as it goes along, and becomes a story of the battles Thatcher fought to change the decadent Britain of the 1970s.

Berlinksi, who has written insightfully about the threat of Islamic fundamentalism in her previous book, *Menace in Europe* (2006), shows now how capable statesmanship can redirect history's seemingly irreversible tide. Her central thesis is that Britain in the 1970s was in serious decline, and that Thatcher turned the country around. A whole style of consensual politics had enfeebled society and left financially profligate governments at the mercy of trade union barons. The result was, among other things, increased public debt and rampant inflation. Ever since 1945 when Clement Attlee's government had nationalized

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industries and established the welfare state, the Conservative Party had accepted the socialist mixed economy. Everybody knew that rising welfare costs and union power were electorally untouchable. Well, almost everybody.

In Britain at that time, the more enterprising people despaired of its future. Britain was retreating from empire, and industrial managers no longer had the power to manage. This feebleness was not just a British disease. It was widespread throughout the Western world. John Hoskyns, one of Thatcher's advisers, observes that Thatcher was in part a trail blazer for Ronald Reagan, because under President Jimmy Carter, "America was suffering, in a less extreme form, from the same fashionable left-of-center waffle that we [in Britain] had been doing in spades, for years." One can only say (and as Berlinski recognizes) that the "waffle" still hasn't gone away. It survives in universities, bureaucracies, and large areas of the judiciary. In Britain it may currently be identified with the causes favored by the late Princess Diana.

It was Thatcher who rejected this feebleness, and her triumphant government from 1979 to 1990 was a succession of battles against what often seemed at the time like a classical hydra. Along with her Conservative colleague Keith Joseph, Thatcher espoused a Hayekian version of the free market. The result was not merely a changed policy but something like a moral revolution. She denounced socialism as an immoral system that enfeebled those who lived under it (much as Ronald Reagan declared the Soviet Union an evil empire), leading to the same sniffy disapproval in Britain that Reagan inspired in American liberals.

In late 1978, the evils of British welfarism spectacularly dramatized themselves in a succession of strikes that left rubbish piling up in the streets, and even in some cases the dead unburied. This was known as "the winter of discontent" and was the perfect prelude to Thatcher's electoral campaign calling the country back to reality after decades of socialist illusion. Her slogan "there is no alternative" is the title of Berlinski's book.

The internationalist version of this debilitating "waffle" rose to a crescendo when in 1982 Argentinean troops seized the Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic. Thatcher ignored the clamor that arose for arbitration, compromise, and a United Nations solution. Although some institutions in Britain were corrupt and enfeebled, she believed the armed services were not among them. She chose the risky option of sending military forces 7,500 miles to take the islands back. On a cost-benefit analysis such a move was absurd: the Falklands' 1,800 British inhabitants could have been re-housed in Britain and given abundant cash assistance for what the war cost. But international relations are not accountancy, and this heroic enterprise transformed British morale. It also helped Thatcher to win the 1983 election. It is a rather thrilling story and Berlinski tells it well.

She recognizes that dealing with such people as Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev was far from being the only piece of luck in Thatcher's successful career. From the moment she challenged Ted Heath for leadership of the Conservative Party, her story is a succession of gambles that all paid off, until her passion for a tax plan to restore democratic accountability to local government led to such unpopularity that her colleagues decided she had to go.

She had abundant luck, but it was her personal qualities that largely accounted for her success. She was unmistakably smart, and it is in trying to pin down what allowed her to dominate the country that Berlinski's book contributes to our understanding. The author is herself slightly shocked at the ferocity of Thatcher's moral disapproval of socialism. I have no doubt, however, that her moral profile was central to her success. It is remarkable how little most politicians stand for, but Thatcher stood for moral independence and a contempt for dependence. She not only admired courage, but had plenty of it herself. She regarded socialism as a school for self-pity and mediocrity. She did not speak with forked tongue, and many people admired exactly that stimulating directness.

Defending her as genuinely conservative, Shirley Letwin argued, in *The Anatomy of Thatcherism* (1993), that her basic aim was not to transform Britain but to restore to its historic place in British culture the vigorous virtues that had been so lost in all the waffle about tolerance, compromise, and compassion. Thatcher hated thinking of the British as a bunch of vulnerable victims needing government handouts.

Another element in her success has been a sense of humor, so that while she could indeed be intense, relentless, and argumentative, she could also detach herself and be amused. The idea that people with strong opinions are less quarrelsome than people who talk endlessly about being open-minded is, of course, profoundly wrong, and Thatcher and Reagan alike illustrate this. They had no trouble negotiating with those whose opinions they disliked. A sense of humor is an important component of intelligence. Those who thought that Thatcher was no intellectual were certainly right, but only at the cost of not recognizing that her political intelligence was remarkable. Her profound political and moral love of freedom gave her an unusual angle on most political questions. It also helped her choose the right moment for combat; she generally held fire until she thought she could win.

She certainly brought something unique to all the battles in which she engaged. No man could have exhibited her stamina in dealing with the Brussels bureaucracy, about whom she had long been ambivalent. She never ceased to insist, to the point where her fellow heads of state were asleep or grinding their teeth, that Britain subsidizing inefficient French farming in the CAP was unfair and intolerable. She had the courage to stand out against the oligarchic clubbability of the European Council in which benefits are bartered to the detriment of national interests. The simple reiterated demand, "we want our money back," could drive strong men to drink, and did drive French president Jacques Chirac to remarkable prodigies of sexist abuse, decorously quoted only in the French by Berlinski.

"There Is No Alternative" is then a version of the great man view of history, and rightly so. The individual, of course, must be recognized as a focus for a vast social and moral context. Thatcher "stood for" or embodied one powerful strain of moral virtue in British life, and "stood against" another moral fashion that thought those traditional virtues "outmoded." But what you "stand for" never decides the actual policy you adopt in all its detail.

The respect for Thatcher shown by both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown testifies to a growing recognition that she did what had to be done. Let us hope that Berlinski's book continues this overdue reassessment of a remarkable statesman who still has much to teach us.

Kenneth Minogue is emeritus professor of political science at the London School of Economics.

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Essay by Carl J. Schramm

Up From Poverty

For most of recorded history, economic growth was static. For centuries, the global economy grew, according to our best estimates, less than half a percentage point annually. Famous displays of wealth, such as the extravagances of the French Court, reflected the concentrating of wealth by duress within a stagnant economic system—not evidence of an economic system that knew how to make new wealth. By 1820, the industrial revolution was starting to change this dismal pattern. At that time, the United States would have been seen as a bad bet to participate in the world's first real economic expansion. Its enormous wealth in natural resources, locked away in remote forests and prairies, was not fully appreciated. Compared to England and the continental powers—with sophisticated cities, well-established banking cultures, great universities, and phalanxes of proto-scientists and successful merchants—the U.S. was an underdeveloped country. In 1820 China was among the world's most productive nations, accounting for one-third of gross world product. The United States produced only 2%. Just over a century later, the U.S. had eclipsed all nations, accounting for over a quarter of global product. China, meanwhile, had fallen to less than 5%.

It is tempting to think, in light of this history, that America was somehow destined to become the world's wealthiest country. Yet if the outcome were obvious and inevitable, we ought to have a clear grasp of how it happened. But we don't. Harvard economist Elhanan Helpman published an entire book exploring the "mystery" of economic growth only a few years ago, and even Robert Solow, who won the Nobel Prize for his pioneering growth theory, today says there are more questions than answers as to the causes of growth. This failure to understand the sources of America's own economic performance, let alone the world's, will be a serious handicap as we try to figure out how to renew prosperity in the face of a dramatic global slowdown. Economists, who continue to feud over what really ended the Great Depression, must help society better understand the modern forces of growth.

A Theoretician's Paradise

Traditional explanations of America's success—our exceptional national character rooted in the Mayflower Compact, our heritage of liberty and equality stemming from the Declaration of Independence, the unique presence of our frontier, our unparalleled capacity to innovate—have been, if not exactly refuted, at least written out of "enlightened" discourse by revisionist social, political, and historical scholarship. Retreating to economics provides no certain perspective: the discipline has produced a wonderland of competing theories. Some attribute America's growth to free trade; others retort that the U.S. was protectionist during its years of growth. The role of institutions is highlighted by some, while others reply that the U.S. succeeded in spite of a poor institutional structure. Despite the fact that we don't really know what caused the acceleration of our own growth, the literature on economic development operates from the premise that not only do we know, we know how to engineer the growth of other countries as well.

Only within the past 20 years has development economics produced comparative data on the behavior of various national economies. Lacking data, the discipline had in the previous three decades become a theoretician's paradise. Every theory was as good as another—none could be proved or disproved. This empirical dearth can be ascribed, at least partly, to context: it was during the Cold War that international development emerged as a popular intellectual pursuit. We needed a strategy right away to ensure that fledgling democracies were able to outgrow Communist regimes notorious for their false promises of economic competence. State-funded aid, official gifts, and even bribes to foreign governments were intended to shore up sometimes democratic and sometimes capitalist allies that might otherwise by force, temptation, or inertia find themselves drifting into the Soviet orbit.

As an early part of this Cold War strategy, the Marshall Plan, in addition to its undisputed success in rebuilding war-shattered economies and helping to keep the western half of Europe free, produced one major unintended consequence. Experts with necessarily limited per-

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spectives stretched the Marshall Plan approach to non-European nations, many of which had been desperately poor throughout their histories. The U.S. thus provided aid even where there were no economies to restore. At first, we simply determined to go through the motions (and garner the supposed goodwill that results from public acts of generosity), even though we didn't honestly believe modern economies could emerge in, say, Africa.

In time a consensus theory did emerge, one that all but ruled out the possibility of the emergence of modern economies anywhere they didn't already exist. Formal development theory can be said to have rested on three assertions—all of which should have discredited it. One was that ethno-cultural characteristics limited the likely spread of modern capitalism. The leading books of the time clearly show that the academic establishment was certain that (say) Hinduism and Confucianism operated as impenetrable bars to economic growth. At best, India and China (if even mentioned!) could hope for subsistence futures, though social disintegration was held to be more likely. The second was an unswerving focus on natural resources as the key to growth. This unreconstructed colonialist worldview—extract what you can and send it home, or at least abroad—drove the construction of massive public infrastructure (in large part to move material to port), littering poor countries with projects that to this day look like incongruent artifacts of western economies that never emerged. Finally, and most tellingly, development theory aggressively argued that economic growth was possible only in the absence of population growth; raising indigenous agricultural production to levels high enough to sustain high birth rates was assumed to be impossible. This tenet above all should have been suspect even at the time. It was already well known that, between 1820 and 1920, the population of Europe increased at an unprecedented rate—while Europe enjoyed rapid economic expansion. Yet the former was explained away as a result of the latter when in fact it was one of the causes. (Similarly, today's anti-growth literature ignores the trend, which emerged in the second half of the last century, that as populations become richer their birth rates decline.)

Later, however, this endemic pessimism gave way to some cautious optimism. Economist Walt Rostow argued in the 1960s that sufficient capital had to be present in an economy for it to reach the point of "take off." Poor countries' development was held back by a lack of capital: expanding populations consumed resources too fast for capital to accumulate. The answer, therefore, was to provide generous infusions of foreign capital.

But any hope of establishing self-sustaining economies was doomed by the method of intervention. A lesson of America's record of growth—that development is often, despite government involvement, messy and unpredictable—was shelved. Aid administrators preferred instead formula-based, orderly, central planning. Much of the mental framework for our own overseas economy-building efforts was borrowed from Soviet theory and practice. The foreign policy community held a tight grip on the process, and insisted that only schooled experts could deploy development grants and organize internal resources to achieve "self-sufficiency." America's success was not a model to be emulated or a goal to be sought. Other countries would have to learn to do with less—even after factoring in all that American, and later developed-country, largesse. Indeed, first generation thinking on economic development took for granted that the populations to be assisted were intrinsically incapable, or perhaps unworthy, of building and sustaining a modern economy. Much of early (and, sadly, contemporary) development policy is tinged with a kind of paternalism that implicitly despairs of other races ever managing their own growth.

Books discussed in this essay:

One Economics, Many Recipes: Globalization, Institutions, and Economic Growth, by Dani Rodrik. Princeton University Press, 280 pages, $35 (cloth), $18.95 (paper)

The Poverty of "Development Economics," by Deepak Lal. Harvard University Press, 144 pages, $28 (paper)

Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet, by Jeffrey D. Sachs. Penguin Press, 400 pages, $27.95 (cloth), $17 (paper)

Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism, by Muhammad Yunus. PublicAffairs, 296 pages, $26 (cloth), $14.95 (paper)

The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good, by William Easterly. Penguin Press, 448 pages, $27.95 (cloth), $16 (paper)

The Bottom Billion: Why The Poorest Countries Are Failing And What Can Be Done About It, by Paul Collier. Oxford University Press, 224 pages, $28 (cloth), $15.95 (paper)

Eradicating Poverty

After capitalism's victory in the Cold War, interest in development waned. Lately, however, economic development has returned to fashion, mostly because the "take off" that Rostow theorized is occurring all over the world. In the touchstone year of 1820, 84% of the world's population lived in what would today be judged "extreme poverty." Today, only 16% do. That is such an astounding achievement that it is difficult even to comprehend. According to the World Bank, in the last 30 years alone—a time of rapid globalization—the number of people living in extreme poverty fell by 25%, or 500 million people. The outbreak of entrepreneurial capitalism within the Communist political system of the People's Republic of China accounts for most of this achievement, but almost every region of the world has seen a decline in the share of its population living in extreme poverty. Bright spots such as Israel and Mauritius, moreover, have proven that growth can occur in regions previously thought allergic to it.

All this appears to have happened in the absence of, or even in spite of, those infusions of foreign aid once presumed to have been poor countries' only hope. In fact, the one factor we can say with certainty is a force behind global growth is capitalism—a reality stubbornly resisted by those who seem blinded either by the now fashionable resistance to growth, often dressed as anti-globalism, or by their unbreakable embrace of planning as the predicate for economic success, or both. But beyond that connection, which not even capitalism's most fervent supporters would say explains everything, lies continued uncertainty. We still don't know why this economic development happened, or how it ever happens. Brilliant economists have developed elegant models to explain the "why" of growth after the fact. Theories, however, are supposed to be predictive. No honest economist would argue that such models could help a country lay out a practical strategy for making growth certain, or even more likely.

Appreciating this reality helps us weigh several recent contributions to the development literature. In his recent book, *One Economics,*

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Many Recipes (2007), Harvard professor of international political economy Dani Rodrik wisely reminds us that there exists no general theory of growth, though he offers pragmatic suggestions in individual cases. In many ways this is an anti-planning book but it is unlikely to be read as such. Many will inevitably see his advice as merely a different way for outsiders to impose answers that necessarily involve more capital investment from the West. Those readers—looking for justifications to continue Western aid programs—are likely to overlook Rodrik's careful elucidation of how the eradication of poverty is the natural result not of foreign aid but of the emergence of free market economies.

In this regard, *One Economics, Many Recipes* echoes a sound and sober work of some years back by Deepak Lal, *The Poverty of "Development Economics"* (1989). Lal, a professor of international development studies at UCLA, characterized the debate among development experts as polarized between state-guided capitalism, a descendant of Keynesian thought, and classical laissez-faire liberal economics. He called the former "dirigiste dogma" and declared that it rejected much of what modern, empirical economics has to teach. In later editions of his book, he contended that the restoration of confidence in markets in the 1980s, more or less formulated in what came to be known as the Washington consensus, had two unintended consequences. First, it provoked a backlash in many developing countries and among many Western observers. And second, it became conflated, unfortunately, with the view that the welfare state, too, had to be exported to poor countries.

Planning Utopia

The title of Jeffrey Sachs's new book, *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet* (2008), suggests its argument: because the developed world is not generous enough with its wealth, some of it must be seized to prevent the rest of the world's further impoverishment. For Sachs, a Columbia University professor, advisor to the secretary general of the United Nations, and author of the credible earlier work, *The End of Poverty* (2005; a book strangely out-of-step with his recent work), the very presence of poverty in the world demonstrates the failure of international economics. There are too many people, too little water, not enough of the right kinds of foods, too much carbon emission, and too unquestioned a reliance on the nation-state's right to operate without regard to global welfare. The only reason poor people still suffer on our rich planet is because markets have failed them. Sound familiar? The vicious-cycle thesis of the last century reemerges as the "poverty trap" of the new. The only acceptable, moral choice is for rich nations to send money. *Common Wealth* is, by any account, a political book—one that aspires to recruit and satisfy an audience that wants complex public policy to be as accessible as an issue of *Vanity Fair*.

This prescriptive approach is entirely consistent with Sachs's broader solution: tax the incomes of rich countries, i.e., extend redistributionist policy beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Because the nation-state is part of the problem, deploying the accumulated wealth of the world should fall to more informed and neutral non-governmental organizations. (NGOs are the *deus ex machina* in market-skeptical literature these days.) The long-awaited world free of poverty, deprived of the ultimate cause of war, is within our grasp and Sachs provides the prescription. Surely, a Nobel Prize awaits this kind of contribution.

This book would run the risk of becoming a contemporary gazetteer of utopian thought but for two disabilities: it is much too ambitious and it is poorly written. Embracing "millennium goals" set by the U.N. and invoking a transnational income redistribution might stir applause at undergraduate convocations but the "real world" won't be moved. Looking to the U.N. for a solution falls outside the constraints of reality.

Economists are reflexively nervous with utopian solutions, especially when these involve enlightened cooperation among the governments of the world which will allegedly cede authority to yet wiser NGOs, entities supposedly above the malignancies of political (and democratic) institutions. Nothing in economists' understanding of reality suggests that such thinking can lead to anything that will improve human welfare. To the contrary, excursions down these paths have mostly brought genocide, corruption, police states, and the erosion of individual freedom and creativity.

Muhammad Yunus, a Ph.D. in economics who won the Nobel Peace Prize, disregards all such evidence in *Creating A World Without Poverty* (2008). Having created Grameen Bank, an institution that increased remarkably the welfare of millions of the world's poorest in Bangladesh through the innovation of microcredit, he appeals for a new world economic order that does not contemplate growth. "The bigger the world economy, the bigger the threat to planet Earth." For global welfare to increase, he argues, capitalism will have to be reformed through "social businesses"—entities that put people above profits.

The book is all nostrums and set-piece stories. The reader is left without a clue as to how this new capitalism might be formed or, more importantly, how it might improve human welfare. Yunus might have expounded the lessons of Grameen Bank so that others might expand on his success. He might have described, perhaps, a transitory state of capitalism, in which an innovation in the non-profit sector could be marshaled to help a poor nation reach the point of "take off" into a modern economy. But to understand that, we must turn elsewhere.

Realism and Foreign Aid

William Easterly's masterly assessment of foreign aid, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (2006), is a sober reflection on what really has—and hasn't—worked. The author, a professor of economics at New York University, concludes that growth is fundamentally driven by local factors that are difficult for outsiders to notice, much less understand. In short, there is no template. In this regard, he anticipates Rodrik's insight that for outside intervention to have a positive effect, it must be carefully tailored to local circumstances. Development is the product of "searchers"—entrepreneurs, accountable politicians, and the rare aid workers—who take measured risks hoping for large payoffs. Easterly argues that development interventions most often fail because professional aid culture insists on planning within a static framework that seldom engages the target population and never allows for feedback.

A realist of the first stripe, he sees aid as more likely to create worse misery, largely because it does not accept that recipient countries can ever become competent capitalist economies. Implicit in his analysis is that planners—most often careerists who rejected making their way in the private sector—are opposed or at least indifferent to private market solutions. Such assumptions infuse the process of aid with a desperation that may explain why so much corruption is tacitly underwritten and tolerated.

Oxford economics professor Paul Collier helps us understand this trap. In his book *The Bottom Billion: Why The Poorest Countries Are Failing And What Can Be Done About It* (2007), Collier sees aid as having readjusted its aspirations. In many countries, aid has morphed into a confused anti-growth strategy of "sustainable, pro-poor growth." He describes an ideological aversion to growth that has created a "deformation" in strategy, whereby growth is embraced and avoided at the same time. So, in pursuit of what central planners believe is the acceptable or right kind of growth, actual growth is sacrificed for fear of making the world worse off. Seeing the destructiveness wrought by prior aid, and unable to think of any other solution, Western officials effectively have given up on

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these countries. The result is that the poorest one-sixth of the world's population missed out on the enormous global boom of the past 20 years. In a well-crafted book overflowing with insight there is this further blessing: phrases that capture the essence of important points. The best: "Growth is not a cure-all, but the lack of growth is a kill-all."

Collier observes that the world's poorest live in conditions little different from what prevailed in the 14th century. Although it does not contain a panacea for growth, the best of the new development literature presumes that growth is good and should be the shared experience of all. Sachs, to his credit, helped establish this consensus. Yet most of this literature is silent on the most fundamental point: how we in the privileged West were able to grow so rich so fast that we can take our own wealth almost for granted, and worry about producing growth for the world's poor.

The Secret to Growth

Economists can't explain growth in part because growth transcends economics. Economic development is intimately tied to the larger historical drama of progress within entire societies and cultures. Growth cannot be divorced from the political environment and its treatment of human creativity. Throughout the development literature, one finds a highly technical debate about which of three ingredients has proven most important to past, and future, development: resources and the capital to exploit them—more infrastructure aid is key; human capital—and therefore more education; and more recently, technology—flood developing countries with laptops and the rest will take care of itself. A credible case can be made for the importance of all three, but their adherents tend to slip into overzealous "magic bullet" rhetoric. The truth is, to a large extent, these solutions are popular because they are so understandable. More capital, more schools, more laptops are manageable concepts to planners. Just paint by numbers.

The debate seems to miss a new ingredient, obscured perhaps by its very ubiquity. Social networks exist and thrive on a scale and to an extent unimaginable even 25 years ago. The cell phone and the internet help well-trained and well-educated individuals multiply exponentially the return on investments in schooling and acquired skills. And the entire world benefits, too. Frictionless information markets, made possible by the world's nearly spontaneous adoption of English as the language of business, makes the phenomenon of social networking perhaps the single most important factor in economic development.

In the end, however, the economic future of all countries hangs on decidedly hard-to-measure political and cultural conditions in which these factors operate. Economic expansion in the United States, now nearly continuous for 200 years, has no deeper cause than the creative freedom individuals enjoy and the absence of limits on their aspirations. Indeed, individual freedom is the ultimate source of America's investable wealth (including the largesse that is shared with the world in the form of aid), its demand for schooling (higher education in particular), and the science that leads to the technology that sustains a virtuous cycle of economic expansion. The readiness of individuals to take risks, the predicate of all economic growth, is intimately tied to their ability to envision making the future different, better, and richer for themselves.

The principles of liberal democracy have made sustainable economic development a possibility for the whole world going forward. The application of creative talent by the individual in the context of commerce—once found only in liberal democracies—is now seen as necessary even inside socialist regimes. The rediscovered insight that entrepreneurs bring forth expanding welfare for all is so powerful that growth has regained its rightful place as a legitimate goal of economic theory. Tragically, books such as *Common Wealth*—its thesis endorsed by many of the world's most highly regarded intellectuals and celebrities—seek to resist the reality that market-based growth is the only real way to eradicate poverty.

No one should pretend that the state is absent in the process of economic growth—in 1817, after all, work began on the Erie Canal, a government project. Throughout the 19th century, the state and federal governments helped facilitate growth through investments in infrastructure and protection of property rights. The United States raced ahead of Europe in patents, for example, because of the way government institutions treated their filing and enforcement.

This, however, highlights an enduring truth often forgotten (or ignored) by proponents of state-led development: economic growth owes more to the forbearance of the state than to its intervention. Governments do not, indeed cannot, make wealth—only their citizens can. And when government protects their freedom, the world's growing population of entrepreneurs, in the bargain, expands human dignity and establishes the foundation of ongoing growth on which civil society ultimately depends.

Carl J. Schramm is president of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and author of The Entrepreneurial Imperative: How America's Economic Miracle Will Reshape the World *(Collins) and co-author with William Baumol and Robert E. Litan of* Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism, and the Economics of Growth and Prosperity *(Yale University Press).*

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Book Review by Algis Valiunas

Highborn Fools

Memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon, 1691–1709: Presented to the King, by Duc de Saint-Simon, translated by Lucy Norton. 1500 Books, 536 pages, $21.95

Memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon, 1710–1715: The Bastards Triumphant, by Duc de Saint-Simon, translated by Lucy Norton. 1500 Books, 528 pages, $21.95

Memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon, 1715–1723: Fatal Weakness, by Duc de Saint-Simon, translated by Lucy Norton. 1500 Books, 528 pages, $21.95

Some of the greatest historians have eulogized, even rhapsodized, the reign of Louis XIV (1638–1715), placing it among the jeweled epochs of human achievement. Thomas Babington Macaulay, for instance, bows graciously if reluctantly before a France supreme both in military might and in peaceable virtues, possessing "over the surrounding countries at once the ascendancy which Rome had over Greece and the ascendancy which Greece had over Rome." That said, Macaulay makes the French despot the villain of his *History of England* (1849–1861).

Winston Churchill in *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (1933–1938), the biography of Churchill's distinguished ancestor, the general who brought Louis XIV's armies to their knees, likewise honors the martial and cultural superiority of Louis's France—superior for as long as such things last, which in this case was until Marlborough was through with them.

> The conquest [of Protestant Europe], planned and largely effected, was not only military and economic, but religious, moral, and intellectual. It was the most magnificent claim to world dominion ever made since the age of the Antonines. And at the summit there reigned in unchallenged splendour for more than half a century a masterful, competent, insatiable, hard-working egotist, born to a throne.

In *The Age of Louis XIV* (1751), Voltaire numbers four regimes down the millennia under which the excellence of thought and taste flourished as nowhere else: the Greece of Pericles, Plato, and Alexander; Augustan Rome; Renaissance Florence under the Medici; and the France of Louis XIV, "perhaps of the four the one which most nearly approaches perfection." Other propitious times and places appear merely gilded beside this one of solid gold. "There will never again be such an era in which a Duke de La Rochefoucauld, the author of the *Maxims*, after discoursing with a Pascal and an Arnauld, goes to the theatre to witness a play of Corneille."

Of course, Voltaire is not known for truckling to royal power. In 1718 the premiere of his play *Oedipus* scandalized the Court with the line "Tremble, unfortunate Kings, for your reign is past." An even more notorious zinger suggests how he really felt about the matter: he longed for the day, he said, when the last king is strangled to death with the bowels of the last priest.

The Duc de Saint-Simon (1675–1755), like Voltaire, was a courtier at Louis XIV's Versailles, and his memoirs, which took him a dozen years to complete and were not published until 1788, over 30 years after his death, are the most famous memoirs ever written. They are also among the most voluminous, at 13,536 pages in the eight-volume Pléiade edition, admirably condensed to some 1,500 pages in this new edition of Lucy Norton's fine translation.

Like Voltaire, Saint-Simon saw the end of France's immemorial glory approaching, though he viewed that end from a sharply different angle. In his memoirs, the Duc treats Voltaire like a scurrilous upstart and dismantles any claim he might have to literary eminence. Voltaire, whose real name was Arouet, was the son of a notary who had served as the Duc's lawyer, and was therefore a lowborn fellow. He was exiled, wrote the Duc,

> for writing monstrously satirical, monstrously impudent verses. I should not waste time over such trifles, had not this Arouet, now a famous poet and academician under the pseudonym Voltaire, also become, after many disastrous adventures, something of a personage in the world of letters, even winning a kind of reputation among certain sorts of people.

In Saint-Simon's estimation, the most celebrated writer of his time is transformed into a jumped-up homunculus, a guttersnipe whom no person of true distinction would regard with anything but contempt.

Saint-Simon was accustomed to delivering such pronouncements from on high. Although he was barely five feet tall and had a voice like a squeeze-toy, no one was more ferociously punctilious about matters of honor and ceremony. He was a traditionalist hothead who rubbed a lot of people the wrong way, including the king. Protective of the privileges of his dukedom as a mother dog is of her newborn litter, he was adept in the scrimmages for status that occupied a good deal of most courtiers' time and energy. As the dukedom had been quite recently bestowed—on Saint-Simon's father by Louis XIII, whom the grateful son venerated above Louis XIV—a certain insecurity colored the Duc's passion for his rightful place. His dignity, which he wore like a long and splendid train, was continually getting stepped on by those following too closely or attempting to overtake him. He was the court's self-appointed guardian of the proprieties, and in that role proved both hard-nosed and feckless.

Sensitive as a spider-web, registering the subtlest tremor of offense against his dignity, Saint-Simon is the aristocrat par excellence, as described by Montesquieu, Tolstoy, and Churchill—the man for whom honor is his raison d'être. Honor can be a force of moral beauty, but it can also be the justification for ugliness of various stripes. Saint-Simon was not above defending his own dubious behavior in honor's name, thus seeming peevish and self-absorbed rather than noble. If honor is to enjoy pride of place in the hearts of a nation's aristocracy, it needs to serve something higher than the grasping self.

Saint-Simon saw others grasping everywhere he looked, and professed to look upon the dismal spectacle with disinterestedness. On the death in 1711 of the dauphin, the king's son and presumptive heir, the pleasures of observing and understanding the reactions of the Court overcame any emotion he might have felt at the loss. Of course, as Saint-Simon had always regarded the dauphin as fundamentally inert, with all the rare distinction of an under-

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cooked pudding, he was not inclined to go into deep mourning.

> ...[S]ince the King was at Marly, I felt unconstrained and could study the crowd at my ease, allowing my eyes to dwell on those who from various motives were much or little affected. Thus I followed the movements of certain personages and endeavored stealthily to penetrate their inmost thoughts; for indeed, to one who knows the inner life of a Court, these first moments after some tremendous event are intensely gratifying. Each face reminds one of the cares and intrigues, the laborious efforts to advance a private fortune or form and strengthen a cabal, the cunning devices designed and executed for such purposes, the attachments at varying degrees of intimacy, the estrangements, dislikes, and hatreds, the unkind turns played and the favours granted, the tricks, petty shifts, and baseness of some individuals, the dashing of the hopes of some in mid-career, the stupefaction of others at the summit who had thought their ambitions fulfilled.

To engage in such watchfulness and to penetrate into the closely guarded chambers of character offer perhaps the supreme pleasures that being a courtier holds for a man such as Saint-Simon. He just happens to be one of those who need to get to the bottom of things. Clear-sightedness ranks perhaps at the top of his list of virtues, and curiosity about other persons' nature and behavior keeps his mind perennially occupied. This is not to say he had the makings of a political philosopher; abstraction and high speculation were not his strengths. The strengths he did possess were those of the ideal historian of his own time and place. He was a master of the character sketch, with the gift for seeing all round—and through—a person, a fondness for the telling anecdote, an eye for the killing detail. In undertaking his memoirs, he knew he was devoting himself to a serious literary enterprise.

His truest insight, evident on nearly every page, is that the history of his time is principally the story of great men, and of the great women who influenced them; his is the history of an aristocratic society, and he shows both its grandeur and its flaws. Above all, he reveals the private caprices of high society that infect great politics: who's in and who's out, who likes or dislikes whom—the ever shifting values of the court determine the course the nation takes. Michel Chamillart, for instance, rose from obscurity to become intendant of finances and then controller-general because he wielded a mean billiard cue and billiards was the king's favorite game.

Louis had been fighting somewhere or other in Europe for 40 years, but in 1708 France was fighting for her life. Monsieur de Vendôme, the general in command of the campaign, appointed his personal enemy Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne to relieve the besieged city of Lille, with the nefarious intention "to make the prince fail in this vital enterprise, cast all the blame upon him, and thus bring him to complete and utter ruin." Rumor mongering about Bourgogne's excess of Christian piety, which was said to undo him as a soldier, cost him the confidence of his grandfather the king and the court.

> Thus the cabal triumphed; not only did they carry with them the masses of all conditions, the smart set and Society, but even sensible people were influenced, with the result that in an incredibly short space of time it became dangerous to praise Mgr le Duc de Bourgogne in the slightest degree, while those who extolled M. de Vendôme at his expense might be sure of pleasing the King and Monseigneur [the Dauphin].

That matters of the utmost gravity should be commandeered by rogues and poltroons disgusts Saint-Simon. He provides a scathing backstage account of the war and demonstrates the monstrosity of the blood-letting that served the whims and ambitions of loathsome self-serving types.

During the 1708 campaign the war struck home as never before. Paris itself seemed in peril.

> At Versailles one was constantly aware of the danger to loved ones and friends, and the best established families felt insecure of the future. Forty-hour services were held in the churches. Mme la Duchesse de Bourgogne spent hours in the chapel when she was supposed to be in bed and asleep, and exhausted her ladies by her vigils. Following her example, wives with husbands in the army scarcely left the churches. Gambling and even conversation had entirely ceased. Fear showed on every face and in people's remarks to a shocking extent. The sound of a horse trotting set everyone running to no known purpose.

The subsequent winter was the hardest anyone could remember. The wheat crop was ruined, and the police for a time forbade prudent farmers from re-sowing their fields with the sturdier barley. Poverty deepened as prices soared, although there should have been enough wheat in storage to feed the nation for two years, even without a harvest. The king's surgeon informed Louis that market regulators were keeping the price of wheat artificially high. Louis expressed his regrets but did nothing. Speculators made their fortunes while the poor died. Saint-Simon's pity for the suffering and his outcry against the predators show him at his most decent: he is "generously angry," to borrow a phrase from Orwell on Dickens.

More often than not, however, when Saint-Simon gets angry, it is a stingy anger, over some slight to his rank: the judicial body known as the Parlement showing insufficient respect to dukes and peers, the king's legitimizing his several bastards. There are times when, indulging his vehement rage over some trifle, Saint-Simon makes one long for the bourgeois good sense of Moliere or La Bruyère, who also knew the mores of the court, though from a humbler vantage. In Moliere's *The Misanthrope* (1666), the beautiful and witty Célimène has written a letter describing why her various suitors don't suit her: "ever since the day I watched...[the viscount] spend three-quarters of an hour spitting into a well, so as to make circles in the water, I have been unable to think highly of him." And La Bruyère, whose *Characters* (1688) Saint-Simon considered a work of genius, eviscerates the very class to which Saint-Simon belongs:

> A comparison between the two opposite extremes of the social scale, between great nobles and the common people, shows that the latter are content with the necessaries of life, while the former, who enjoy its superfluities, feel dissatisfied and deprived.... The one ingenuously displays a rude but honest nature; the other hides a corrupt and vicious spirit under a rind of politeness. The people have no wit, and the nobility have no soul; the former are basically good, and lack veneer; the latter have veneer, and nothing underneath it. Am I to choose? I'll not hesitate; I'll belong to the common people.

La Bruyère's sentiment is one that Saint-Simon could not begin to share, though he was able to understand it. For Saint-Simon's memoirs are full of highborn fools and miscreants, who have done nothing to deserve their golden fortune, and a great deal to deserve the contempt of good men. Although very much a creature of his time and place who stirs up the ambivalence of the modern reader, Saint-Simon was a good man who wrote an even better book. His memoirs do not make one regret the passing of the age of great kings; but they do make one wish for a similar chronicler of our own democratic age—wise, vital, witty, and knowing everything that goes on among those in power.

Algis Valiunas is a literary journalist and the author of Churchill's Military Histories *(Rowman & Littlefield).*

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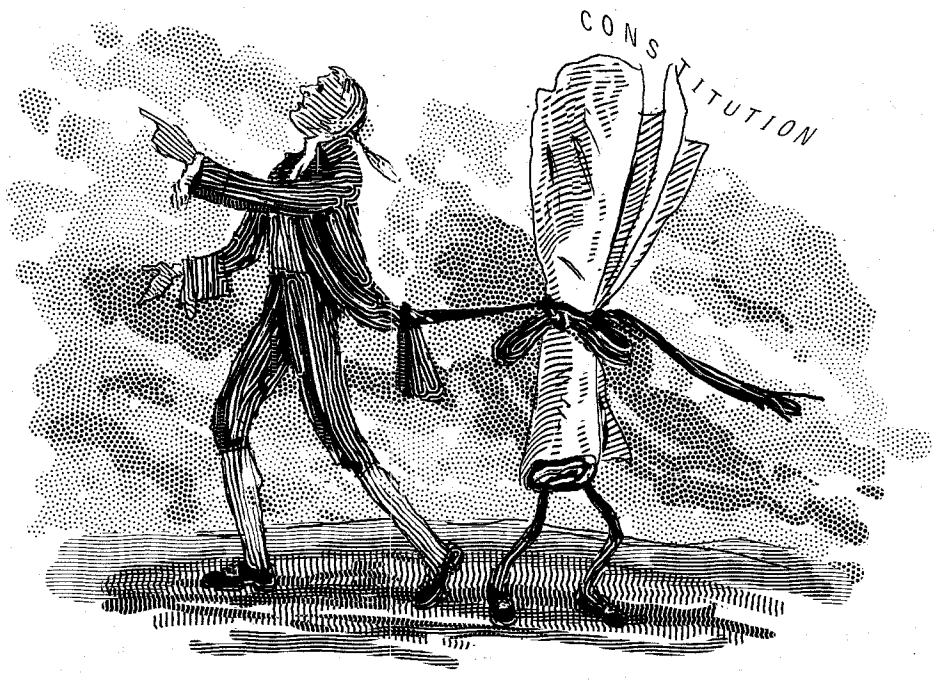
Book Review by Joseph M. Bessette

Hail to the Chief

Thomas Jefferson and Executive Power, by Jeremy D. Bailey.
Cambridge University Press, 296 pages, $84



Reflecting on Thomas Jefferson's accession to the presidency in 1801, John Marshall expressed his concern to Alexander Hamilton that Jefferson would "embody himself with the house of representatives. By weakening the office of President he will increase his personal power." Marshall's prediction was understandable. Jefferson, after all, had stood for office as the head of a political party that opposed concentrating power in the national government at the expense of the states and in the executive branch at the expense of the legislature.

Hamilton, however, had served with Jefferson in George Washington's administration and possessed a perspective that most lacked. Hamilton denied that Jefferson was "an enemy of the power of the Executive." Indeed, while serving as Washington's Secretary of State, Jefferson "was generally for a large construction of the Executive authority, & not backward to act upon it in cases which coincided with his views." We now know from Jefferson's notes of cabinet meetings that Hamilton was right. Especially in separation of powers disputes, such as contests over executive privilege, Jefferson supported a broad understanding of the president's constitutional powers. Nor was Jefferson a legislative supremacist during his service as war-time governor of Virginia (1779–1781). Indeed, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* he denounced the legislature's frequent interference in the operation of the executive branch. Legislative tyranny was no less dangerous than executive tyranny: "One hundred and seventy-three despots would surely be as oppressive as one.... An elective despotism was not the government we fought for." Moreover, Jefferson apparently found little fault with Hamilton's case for a strong and independent presidency in *The Federalist* (especially Nos. 67–77) because after reading the work in Paris he pronounced it "the best commentary on the principles of government which was ever written." Decades later he made it one of the few required texts at the University of Virginia.

Yet Marshall's fears that Jefferson would scale back executive power were not entirely misplaced. In 1787 Jefferson had written his friend James Madison that he was "not a friend to a very energetic government" for it is "always oppressive." Then, in 1793, when President Washington declared American neutrality in the new European war, despite a treaty that seemed to commit the United States to defend French possessions in the Caribbean, Jefferson urged Madison to refute the broad public defense of presidential power mounted by Hamilton on behalf of the administration. After the election of 1800, Jefferson, in stark contrast to his two predecessors, dressed down for his own inaugural, wearing no sword and eschewing a formal carriage and attendants. Once in office he broke precedent by sending his annual message to Congress only as a written document, not as a speech before a joint session of Congress. The prior practice, he believed, bore too much the trappings of monarchy.

All this is well known and helps to explain why modern scholars have trouble sorting out Jefferson's understanding of the executive power vested by the U.S. Constitution.

There is, in fact, no systematic treatment of executive power in Jefferson's voluminous writings—nothing, for example, to match Hamilton's defense of executive energy in *The Federalist*. Instead, what we have are mainly Jefferson's proposals for the Virginia constitution and isolated (and usually private) letters that touch on executive power, some written after he had retired from public office.

Of course, we also have Jefferson's actions as president of the United States, which, presumably, speak even louder than words. And here no one would accuse him of neglecting to exercise executive authority. Without asking Congress for approval, he sent a naval squadron to the Mediterranean to undertake offensive actions against the Barbary pirates; despite constitutional qualms, he supported the purchase of the Louisiana Territory and asked Congress to approve the treaty and appropriate the nec-

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essary funds; to pressure European nations to respect American neutrality he called for an embargo on commerce that vastly expanded the reach of executive power; and, fearing war with Britain, he ordered the fortification of coastal cities and the building of gunboats without a congressional appropriation.

What to make of all this? Was Jefferson actually a Hamiltonian in his embrace of a powerful presidency, despite his symbolic efforts to drain it of some of its majesty? Was he simply inconsistent, favoring a more ministerial presidency as party theorist but a more autonomous, energetic presidency as the occupant of the office? Was he, as Henry Adams argued, essentially a hypocrite? It "was hard to see," Adams wrote, "how any President could be more Federalist than Jefferson himself." In *Thomas Jefferson and Executive Power*, Jeremy Bailey challenges Adams's interpretation and the modern "scholarly consensus." Jefferson, according to Bailey, possessed and acted upon a coherent, comprehensive understanding of executive power that revolutionized the relationship of the presidency to American democracy.

To be specific,

> Jefferson's understanding of democratic energy requires a president who will use declarations to articulate the principles of his administration in order to direct national aspirations, present a standard by which the administration can be judged, and, most important, bring the opinions of citizens together under a single head.

In this way, argues Bailey, a professor of political science at the University of Houston, "Jefferson transformed presidential speech in order to energize the presidency, and Jefferson transformed the presidency in order to bring energy to declarations."

Bailey develops these points with great care in detailed discussions of Jefferson's proposals for the Virginia constitution; his service as governor; his reactions to the proposed new national executive and early debates over executive power under the Constitution; his transformation of the inaugural address into an instrument for articulating principles and fostering change; his removals of Federalists from executive offices to enhance public confidence in the administration of government; his endorsement of the Louisiana Purchase despite constitutional misgivings; his support of the 12th Amendment (separating the votes for president and vice president) to help democratize the presidency; his embrace of the two-term limit to enable new presidents to reenergize the office; and his use of proclamations and special messages to promote his educational project. Each of these discussions is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the American Founding, American political development, and executive power in the constitutional order. Together they constitute an original and provocative interpretation of Jefferson's democratic statesmanship and constitutionalism.

Perhaps most challenging are Bailey's arguments that in Jefferson's view the president "alone could claim to represent [the majority will]" because "he alone was nationally elected"; that Jefferson "deliberately transformed the inaugural address into a regular opportunity for announcing change"; and that, more generally, "Jefferson transformed presidential speech in order to energize the presidency" by uniting "public opinion and executive discretion." Regarding the first claim, Bailey's Jefferson sounds strikingly like Woodrow Wilson, who in his later writings expressly defended the superior representational qualities of the presidency. Yet Jefferson made no such overt claim. He perhaps came closest in his First Inaugural when he warned of future critics "whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground." Bailey makes much of this statement, citing it numerous times. But to say that some critics will lack the president's comprehensive view is not to say that every member of Congress, much less Congress as a whole, will. Indeed, as Whig Congressman Abraham Lincoln later argued in the House of Representatives, Congress may better represent public opinion across a range of issues than any single president could. Bailey's case would be stronger if he could adduce some evidence of Jefferson's reservations about the representational character of Congress.

On the partisan reinvention of the inaugural address, Bailey does not address the alternative thesis, perhaps best articulated by James Ceaser of the University of Virginia, that Jefferson did not intend to institutionalize party competition in American national government but saw the election of 1800 as an exceptional opportunity to refound the regime on proper republican principles (hence Jefferson's later description of the election as the "revolution of 1800"). Thus, for Jefferson the lengthy list of "essential principles" that he detailed in the First Inaugural was not the equivalent of a party platform subject to revision or replacement by future presidents. On the contrary, as he put it, these principles were so fundamental—"the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction"—that any "wander[ing] from them" should be corrected by "retrac[ing] our steps and...regain[ing] the road which *alone* leads to peace, liberty, and safety" (emphasis added).

This, then, leads to Bailey's broader argument about Jefferson's transformation of political speech. While it is certainly true that Jefferson used his two inaugural addresses, official proclamations, and some important open letters to reach a broad audience—note that while Washington's First Inaugural addressed "Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives," Jefferson's addressed "Friends and Fellow Citizens"—Jefferson, like all the early presidents, made little effort to speak directly to the American people. As Jeffrey Tulis has shown in *The Rhetorical Presidency* (1987), for example, Jefferson as president made only three public speeches other than his inaugural addresses, all to leaders of Indian tribes. The founding generation had a healthy skepticism of popular rhetoric, seeing it as a demagogue's tool. Bailey himself points out that Jefferson "believed [Patrick] Henry's talent for speech provided a dangerous example of the sway that demagogues could hold in democratic government."

Moreover, as Bailey indicates, Jefferson made no public appeal on behalf of the 12th Amendment, despite its centrality to his plan to make the president the genuine choice of the people, and he "publicly defended the Louisiana Purchase only in a few short sentences in his Second Inaugural." He went further in defending the controversial embargo by writing replies to addresses from state legislatures. And when he received hundreds of critical addresses from groups in Massachusetts, he "had a reply printed and distributed." But still, there was no major public speech defending the embargo, no address before a joint session of Congress, no essay in the public press. While Bailey acknowledges that Jefferson did not "usher...in the rhetorical presidency" or "rel[y]...on popular leadership," it is difficult to square these concessions with his broader theory of Jefferson's democratic statesmanship.

What, then, of Jefferson's understanding of executive power under the Constitution? Strikingly, despite service in Washington's cabinet, four years as vice president, and two terms as president, Jefferson had almost nothing to say in his own writings about the meaning and extent of the powers and duties vested in the president by Article II of the Constitution. Bailey shows that Jefferson only once recurred to the oath of office as a ground for asserting authority: to defend removing "monarchist[s]" from executive offices. But here, tellingly, Jefferson wrote not in his own name, but under a pseudonym. And later, in an important letter encouraging the Virginia governor to act aggressively to prepare for possible war with Britain, Jefferson referenced "our constitutional powers, to carry the law into execution" to justify a broad understanding of executive responsibilities.

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As a rule, however, Jefferson did not discuss the president's constitutional authority and conspicuously avoided connecting his assertions of power—such as challenging the Barbary pirates, purchasing the Louisiana Territory, and spending unappropriated funds to prepare for war—to provisions in the Constitution. (For more on these episodes and what they say about Jefferson's deeper understanding of executive power, see Gary Schmitt's important essay in Thomas Cronin's book, *Inventing the American Presidency*, 1989.) Typically, Jefferson simply acted, providing neither a constitutional defense for his bold moves nor some other public justification on grounds of necessity or national interest. Here Jefferson differed markedly from Presidents Washington, Jackson, and Lincoln, all of whom grounded vigorous assertions of executive power on the Constitution's actual words, especially the vesting clause ("The executive Power shall be vested in a President"), the presidential oath (to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution"), the commander-in chief power, and the duty to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed."

Instead, Jefferson wrote a handful of letters, most not intended for public consumption, in which, following John Locke's defense of "executive prerogative" in the *Second Treatise of Government*, he defended the need for executives sometimes to act outside the law for the public good. Jefferson elaborated his position most fully while in retirement in an 1810 letter to John Colvin. "A strict observance of the written laws," wrote Jefferson,

> is doubtless *one* of the high duties of a good citizen, but it is not *the highest*. The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation. To lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law, would be to lose the law itself, with life, liberty, property and all those who are enjoying them with us; thus absurdly sacrificing the end to the means.

Although this formulation ties prerogative tightly to self-preservation, later in the letter Jefferson argued the propriety of a president purchasing Florida from the Spanish, in some circumstances without Congress's prior approval. As Bailey notes, "[t]he hypothetical presents wider latitude for executive prerogative" than examples of self-preservation in wartime. Here Jefferson seemingly embraces Locke's broader defense of prerogative, which ties executive discretion not simply to self-preservation but to "the public good."

As Bailey shows, Jefferson's defense of prerogative was closely connected to his doctrine of strict construction of the Constitution. As Jefferson wrote to a senator during congressional debate on the Louisiana Purchase, "Our peculiar security is in possession of a written Constitution. Let us not make it a blank paper by construction." Yet the more narrowly one interprets or defines the powers of government, especially the executive powers, the more often it will be necessary for executive officials to go beyond the letter of the law to meet necessity or promote the public good.

In *The Federalist*, Alexander Hamilton had rejected such an approach because of its dangers to constitutional government. "The circumstances that endanger the safety of nations are infinite," he wrote, "and for this reason no constitutional shackles can wisely be imposed on the power to which the care of it is committed." Later, after detailing how the ancient Spartans used a subterfuge to twice vest the powers of command in their best admiral in violation of Spartan law, Hamilton concluded:

> Wise politicians will be cautious about fettering the government with restrictions that cannot be observed, because they know that every breach of the fundamental laws, though dictated by necessity, impairs that sacred reverence which ought to be maintained in the breast of rulers towards the constitution of a country, and forms a precedent for other breaches where the same plea of necessity does not exist at all, or is less urgent and palpable.

For Hamilton, the Jeffersonian prescription is the more dangerous one because it too often severs executive power from law, thereby undermining reverence for the Constitution and ultimately encouraging unjustified breaches of the fundamental law. Perhaps even Jefferson understood this at some level, for he never argued his case for prerogative publicly. Indeed, his view never caught on as a public doctrine in American politics, despite its rediscovery by scholars in recent decades. Instead, we expect our presidents to make a constitutional case for their actions, and they have lawyers aplenty to help them do so. When they make their constitutional case, they expose themselves to contrary interpretations from the other branches, the bar, the academy, and ultimately the people.

Though well written, *Thomas Jefferson and Executive Power* is not an easy read. There is much going on here and much to learn. It requires close attention throughout to plumb the subtleties of Jefferson's words and actions and to fully appreciate Bailey's sensitive and nuanced interpretation. Readers will find it well worth the effort.

Joseph M. Bessette is the Alice Tweed Tuohy Professor of Government and Ethics at Claremont McKenna College.

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Book Review by John Zvesper

Notes on the State of Jefferson

Enlightened Republicanism: A Study of Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, by David Tucker. Lexington Books, 174 pages, $55

The Great Seal of Virginia (1776); interpretation by Elliott Banfield

David Tucker's *Enlightened Republicanism* combines impressive scholarship with wise judgments about the impact and the limits of philosophical thinking in the political world. It does not solve all of the mysteries in Thomas Jefferson's political thought, but it lays them bare, and it renews our conviction that Jefferson deserves to be taken seriously as, in James Madison's not wholly ironic words, a "philosophical legislator."

Jefferson's seriousness as a political thinker has often been doubted, by his political friends as well as by his enemies. In fact, his political enemies have often seen more consistency—and therefore more danger—in his thinking than have his friends. He was reluctant to risk his political career by exposing his ideas to publicity and criticism, so he constantly encouraged other writers (his young friend Madison, for example) to publish thoughts that he shared but did not want to commit himself to in print. Jefferson never wrote a political treatise comparable to Madison's contributions to *The Federalist* or John Adams's *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*.

Or did he? Tucker, an associate professor in the Naval Postgraduate School's Department of Defense Analysis, is one of those scholars who have noticed that Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*—the only book he ever published—is a more systematic work than first meets the eye, and therefore a more important source for understanding Jefferson than one might think.

Jefferson did not speak publicly in his thousands of letters, and he did not speak only for himself in his many dozens of state papers. *Notes* is the only work in which he addresses the public in his name alone. He speaks with a gentleman's modesty and reserve, intentionally appearing less formal and orderly than he was. The book's central chapter, for example, stands between the chapters on nature and on law, and discusses the relationship between nature and law. (Following Jefferson, Tucker uses this basic structure in his own book.)

Tucker points out that in its structure and content, *Notes* served Jefferson's main political purpose: teaching Americans that their circumstances offered them "the possibility, rarely if ever before given, to create republican governments," which meant to "create as far as possible" laws and "a way of life in accord with nature." "The animating spirit of Jefferson's republican vision," Tucker writes, "is its appeal to nature to correct convention."

Jefferson was aware, of course, that nature could be harsh and downright dangerous, but he also thought it purposeful and friendly enough to give human beings resources such as their natural "moral sense," which make social and political life possible and desirable. Nevertheless, he was not a dogmatic revolutionary trying to wrench complicated reality into complete conformity with reason and nature. Jefferson understood that circumstances have to be respected, and that gradual, non-violent, and even unnoticed changes are usually most prudent. "Jefferson's strongest tendency," writes Tucker, "was to accept the complexity of experience, even as he was guided by the light of reason."

The author notices that Jefferson even shied away from abstract political theories such as the state of nature and the social contract, which could lead politicians and citizens astray. He preferred a historical view of socio-economic

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and political development, dividing the history of mankind into four stages: hunter, pastoral, agricultural, and commercial. Even the most primitive men lived in societies, he observed.

In *Notes*, Jefferson explains the difference between barbaric and civilized societies: true civilization requires individuals to govern their conduct by subduing their selfish passions and respecting the natural equality and rights of others. Just like the barbaric Indians, European nations were ruled essentially by force and by the degradation of whole classes. Tucker draws our attention to Jefferson's description of Indian manners, which Tucker says could also describe Jefferson's view of the manners of European aristocrats: "proud, touchy about their honor and thus inclined to fight, glory seeking, and known to primp." Neither society was civilized, Jefferson thought, though the Indians perhaps had their poverty as an excuse.

Tucker does not comment on every part of *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and he often ventures well outside the text. Especially in discussing Jefferson's thoughts about nature and human nature, Tucker turns to his subject's letters, to produce an "interpretive reconstruction" of his views. He is compelled to do this because not even in *Notes* does Jefferson give natural philosophy "his full attention." One wonders how Tucker can claim that this philosophy was "the basis of his enlightened republicanism" with such gaping holes in the evidence. At times his "reconstruction" (or, more accurately, his construction) of Jefferson's natural philosophy is speculative if not altogether incredible. Does Jefferson's reference to "the chain of being" make him as Aristotelian as Tucker suggests? If so, is that compatible with Tucker's suggestion that in Jefferson's view "species come and go, but at any given moment nature is well-designed"? And how does that notion fit with Jefferson's case for political liberty and religious toleration?

When he addresses this last question, Tucker concludes that Jefferson's republic needs "the discretion of the wise statesman…to balance the claims of freedom and happiness." Public opinion will be the most powerful force in a republic, and the *circumstances* under which a people live—their stage of socio-economic development, perhaps influenced but not wholly determined by their statesmen—will help to decide whether public opinion will find good ways to balance liberty and happiness. For one of the epigraphs of his book, Tucker chooses a rarely-cited but important passage from Plato's *Republic*, in which Socrates talks about including in the best regime a group of philosophical rulers who will perpetuate the founders' understanding. In Jefferson's enlightened republic no such elite group, whether of scientists, philosophers, or statesmen, could rule. Jefferson writes that the people themselves will have to be "the guardians of their own liberty." But as he shows, it is actually the circumstances, education, and manners of the people that will decide their fate.

As is commonly known, Jefferson favored an agrarian America, where plenty of land would allow Americans to be independent farmers, and thereby to avoid the inegalitarian and dehumanizing dependence of big city workers and businessmen upon their customers. Like Plato's Socrates, Jefferson saw reasons to regret the movement from a simpler to a more complicated way of life. But the practical politician in Jefferson recognized that his agrarian ideal was already at odds with Americans' commercial habits, and that this tension would only increase. Besides, as Tucker comments, "subordinating the arts and commerce to a preferred way of life is not compatible with their free development, and their free development is the only way to enjoy their benefits. Nor is such subordination compatible with free government." So natural equality and its ethical demands had to find ways of flourishing in America under socio-economic circumstances that Jefferson would have found unfavorable.

In the book's most persuasive and valuable section, Tucker takes up Jefferson's view of the way that nature and natural equality can be known, and shows that Jefferson's insistence on judging for oneself—the method of both common sense and natural science—was not a continuation of the Protestant Reformation but a democratization of the scientific revolution. "[F]ree inquiry," which Tucker says was for Jefferson "the beginning and the end of the enlightenment," is "the shared root of common sense and science." Jefferson disagreed with Francis Bacon, who regarded common sense as an obstacle to the discovery of useful truths. Baconian science sought practical technological advances, whereas for Jefferson science helped human beings understand the world. In his view, then, common sense contributes at least as much to human understanding as science does. Tucker goes so far as to suggest that for Jefferson, moral and political experience and observations (including the observation of human equality) were the basis for his natural science, rather than the other way around. Against Daniel Boorstin, Tucker argues that "Jefferson did not think that knowledge of human equality resulted from scientific effort, cautious hypothesizing and careful accumulation of facts. Equality was not one of those hidden aspects of nature that man had to work to uncover." The intuitively obvious ("self-evident") truth of our political equality is based on the common sense observation that human beings are neither beasts nor gods.

Tucker does not say so, but his analysis suggests that for Jefferson's politics, science is needed more for destructive than for constructive purposes. Science must destroy priests' and pseudo-aristocrats' pretensions to divine authority to rule. After it banishes these superstitions, human beings may again easily sense the "palpable" truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by divine right.

John Zvesper is the author of Political Philosophy and Rhetoric: A Study of the Origins of American Party Politics *(Cambridge University Press) and* From Bullets to Ballots: The Election of 1800 and the First Peaceful Transfer of Political Power *(the Claremont Institute).*

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Book Review by Robert M.S. McDonald

Light and Liberty

The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson, by Kevin J. Hayes.
Oxford University Press, 752 pages, $34.95

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was a true polymath. As one of his early biographers put it, Jefferson "could calculate an eclipse, survey an estate, tie an artery, plan an edifice, try a case, break a horse, dance a minuet, and play the violin." He knew seven languages, masterminded the expedition of Lewis and Clark, and helped to introduce pasta and ice cream to the American palate. At Monticello, his mountaintop estate, he experimented with the cultivation of grapes, tomatoes, and about 30 varieties of the green pea. As president of the American Philosophical Society, the New World's premier scientific organization, he promoted the study of archaeology and anthropology. At West Point he established the United States Military Academy and in Charlottesville he founded the University of Virginia. After the British in 1814 torched the Library of Congress, the U.S. government acquired from Jefferson his personal collection of 6,487 volumes, twice as many as had been lost in the blaze and, at the time, the largest assemblage of books in the western hemisphere.

Not long after dispatching to the capitol approximately 20 wagonloads of treatises on everything from Pierre Abélard to zoology, Jefferson began to rebuild his Monticello library. As he informed John Adams, "I cannot live without books." Thus it seems striking that Kevin J. Hayes's excellent new study, *The Road to Monticello*, is the very first literary biography of America's most well-read founding father.

Jefferson's biographers traditionally base their studies less on what he read and more on what he said and did. This is reasonable enough, and certainly no easy task. His life was long and controversial. In addition, he wrote about 18,000 letters—not to mention dozens of laws and addresses, the beginnings of an autobiography, and his book-length *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Even so, it is fairly straightforward for scholars to scan the indexes (and now conduct electronic keyword searches) of collections of his writings to find apt quotations that breathe life into familiar episodes, and linger over the wording of selected texts to make original points. This was the technique employed by Dumas Malone, the doyen of Jefferson biographers, whose six-volume *Jefferson and His Time* (1948–81) won the Pulitzer Prize for providing the fullest, fairest, and most perceptive account to date of the third president's life. Yet the approach has its limits. Merrill Peterson's *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (1970) comprised over 1,000 pages of meticulous research. Even so, Peterson found Jefferson "the least self-revealing" of the founders and "the hardest to sound to the depths of being. It is a mortifying confession but he remains for me, finally, an impenetrable man."

Hayes's approach is even more challenging but, in certain respects, more rewarding. The difficulty comes from the fact that interpreting all those letters seems downright breezy compared to making sense of thousands of books—encompassing a dizzying array of topics and appearing in several different languages—collected over a lifetime. A professor of English at the University of Central Oklahoma, Hayes tries to reconstruct Jefferson's earliest library (which burned during a 1770 fire at his boyhood home), pouring over letters and commonplace notebooks to find youthful references to *Tom Thumb* and *The History of Fortunatus*, the latter an improbable tale of a man who—not unlike a young and imaginative reader—could travel to any destination and remain invisible all the while. Hayes's technique might tempt less prudent scholars to engage in flights of fancy. How does one know when a story goes beyond capturing its reader's imagination and starts to shape his character? Jack McLaughlin's *Jefferson and Monticello* (1988), a generally admirable but occasionally far-fetched study, looked at Jefferson's life not through the lens of his reading but instead through his architectural designs. He suggested that Monticello's dome and the oculus that crowned it signified for Jefferson his mother's breast!

Hayes eschews this sort of psychoanalysis, presenting instead commonsense interpretations founded on his seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of the works on Jefferson's book-

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shelves. One of *The Road to Monticello*'s great accomplishments is to demonstrate how Jefferson's life as a reader shaped his performance as a writer. Hayes points out, for example, that the wording and argument of the *Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774) reflected Captain John Smith's *Description of New England* and *Generall Historie of Virginia*. These 17th-century works, which aimed to spur transatlantic migration, imagined a new world in which a man of "small meanes" could rely solely on "his merit to advance his fortunes" as he endeavored to "tread and plant that ground [which] he hath purchased by the hazard of his life." Jefferson, Hayes suggests, echoed Smith's words when he contended that America was established not by the English government but by English individuals: "Their own blood was spilt in acquiring lands for their settlement, their own fortunes expended in making that settlement effectual. For themselves they fought, for themselves they conquered, and for themselves alone they have right to hold."

Jefferson's reading influenced his writing in other ways as well. In the months before he sat down to draft the Declaration of Independence, death claimed one of his mentors as well as his mother and second daughter. Hayes acknowledges the important influence on the Declaration of "the hundreds of pages and countless hours Jefferson spent reading about natural law and natural rights." He contends, however, "that grief prompted him to turn to works beyond legal theory and political philosophy. When Jefferson was in mourning, Locke, Kames, and Burlamaqui gave way to "the poetry and moral philosophy of Sherlock, Young, and Ossian." Considering the degree to which Jefferson structured and styled the Declaration to appeal to hearts as well as minds, Hayes seems on firm ground when he argues that "the influence of poets, devotional writers, and other belletrists... cannot be ignored." From such unlikely sources may even have come some of the Declaration's wording—for example, its praise of the colonial assemblies for opposing "with manly firmness" King George III's "invasions on the rights of the people." "Manly firmness" is a phrase from British poet James Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda*, a tragic drama well known to Jefferson in which the words occur in a speech pointing out the difference between wars for conquest and wars for liberty.

Such interesting revelations aside, *The Road to Monticello* tells us less about Jefferson as a man of state than it does about him as a man of letters. In many respects it is a reverse image of standard treatments of his life. These hop, skip, and jump past his upbringing, education, and the intervals enjoyed as a private citizen to focus on his public career. Hayes's biography, by contrast, devotes just over 100 of its 752 pages to Jefferson's service as America's first secretary of state, second vice president, and third president. Even within these pages, power politics gets less emphasis than the power of words to shape the political landscape. Jefferson's epic battle with Alexander Hamilton takes place chiefly in the pages of his *Anas*, a collection of anecdotes later manhandled by editors. Rather than detailing Jefferson's presidency, Hayes provides a perceptive reading of the First Inaugural's carefully-chosen rhetoric.

This, on balance, is all for the good. Certainly Jefferson appeared happier in the bookshops of Paris and Philadelphia than in the halls of government. Undoubtedly he was more at ease in private, unguarded moments, such as when one of his slaves, Isaac, observed him paging through his "abundance of books; sometimes [he] would have twenty of 'em down on the floor at once" so that he could refer to one and then another. This, Isaac said, was evidence of his master's "mighty head." Jefferson always seemed reluctant to discuss his career on the national stage. His autobiography ends abruptly when he assumes office as secretary of state, a post that exposed him to a train of high-stakes controversy. Hayes's biography, then, captures Jefferson not only as he saw himself but also as he wanted to be seen. It stands in marked contrast to recent studies that portray Jefferson as a Machiavellian politico or dwell on his slaveholding—and his possible relationship with Sally Hemings, his deceased wife's enslaved half-sister.

This is not to imply that there were two Jeffersons. Whether acting as citizen-scholar or officeholder, his aim was the same. A true pillar of the Enlightenment, he believed that "knowledge is power." He could never quench his thirst for either. But as Hayes demonstrates, the road to Monticello was a two-way street. In a 1773 cataloging of his library, Jefferson noted that 42 volumes had been lent out to friends, and his willingness to share his books would continue. So would his practices of providing reading lists to friends and family members, advancing the cause of education, and attacking institutions and political arrangements that he believed bred ignorance. For Jefferson, success constituted more than merely advancing in politics. The campaign that mattered most was the fight for freedom and he never doubted, as he wrote in 1795, that "light and liberty go together."

One of his final literary achievements was his own epitaph:

> Here was buried
> Thomas Jefferson
> Author of the Declaration of American Independence
> of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom
> & Father of the University of Virginia.

He directed that this text be inscribed onto an obelisk—a form, his books told him, that for the people of ancient Egypt signified light. He could have listed the many political offices he had held, but these were beside the point. Light and liberty *did* go together. He wanted to focus on the instances in which he had helped to free from oppression the body, mind, and soul. His real greatness, he wanted posterity to understand, came not from the power that men had given to him but from the power that he had given to men.

Robert M.S. McDonald is associate professor of history at the United States Military Academy and editor of Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point *(University of Virginia Press).*

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Essay by Daniel Walker Howe

The Ages of Jackson

The most common reminder of Andrew Jackson today is his picture on the $20 Federal Reserve note. The irony could hardly be greater: Jackson destroyed the national banking system of his own day and did not believe in paper money. Nevertheless his face has graced the Twenty since 1929, when it replaced Grover Cleveland's. His engraved image on the bill has evolved over time, recently in the direction of portraying a kinder, gentler Jackson. Historians' images of the seventh president have changed too, as succeeding generations have reinterpreted him, usually but not always with an eye to sustaining his stature as a national hero or as a partisan symbol. To trace these changing images over time is to see a remarkable succession of different Andrew Jacksons.

From the start his public image generated controversy. When first running for president in 1824, he campaigned as a military leader and as a man of the people, an outsider who would redeem the nation's virtue from a self-perpetuating clique of elitists (for so his campaign depicted the James Monroe Administration and the rival candidates). Jackson's opponents saw him as a violent, undisciplined, uncouth brute, ill-suited to supreme responsibility in a republican government. During the 185 years since, rival groups have continued to portray contrasting images of Jackson.

The Democratic Party has always maintained a certain proprietary interest in his image, commemorating him as its founder in "Jackson Day" dinners—traditionally held on January 8, the anniversary of his victory over the British at New Orleans in 1815. Frankin D. Roosevelt, an admirer of Thomas Jefferson (perhaps a more appropriate hero for a patrician), changed the name of these events to "Jefferson-Jackson Day" dinners. Tennessee and Louisiana Democrats, however, have continued to observe an undiluted Jackson Day. In recent years such dinners no longer recur on any fixed schedule. A Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in Des Moines, Iowa, on November 10, 2007, drew both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

ANDREW JACKSON

Uncovering Jackson

In our own day, even as the political use of Jackson continues, we are also fortunate to have at least one small group of scholars conscientiously dedicated to uncovering and preserving the most authentic knowledge of him possible, independent of all stereotypes: the Andrew Jackson Papers project at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, currently under the able direction of Daniel Feller, a professor in the history department. The project started in the 1970s, and is now working on volumes 7 and 8. These volumes cover 1829 and 1830, the first two of Jackson's eight years in the White House. Feller expects the project will total 16 volumes and take until about 2030 to complete.

As they go along, Feller and his assistant editors make startling discoveries. In January 1825, John Quincy Adams received an anonymous letter threatening civil war if he did not withdraw from the presidential race rather than allow it to be decided as the Constitution provides by the House of Representatives (no candidate had received an absolute majority of the electoral votes in the 1824 election). Applying handwriting analysis, assistant editor Tom Coens traced the letter to William B. Lewis, a confidante of Andrew Jackson, Adams's leading rival. Amazingly, Lewis also may have penned an anonymous letter to Jackson himself in 1830, warning the then president of assassination if he stood for reelection. The editors suspect that Lewis wanted Jackson to seek another term and knew that nothing was more likely to prompt the Old Hero to take that decision than such a threat!

I asked each of the three editors, so familiar with the documentary sources of Jackson's life, which of the many Jackson biographies was their favorite. All picked the same one: *Life of Andrew Jackson* by James Parton, published in three volumes between 1859 and 1861.

Parton wrote a number of biographies, best-sellers in their time, but Jackson's has remained his best known. He relied closely on documentary evidence, which he sometimes quoted at length and supplemented by interviewing surviving participants. Every later biographer has relied considerably upon him. Parton was critical of Jackson's presidency, especially the "spoils system," instituted by wholesale removals of federal employees down to the level of local postmasters, whom Jackson replaced with his own followers. Parton called this practice "an evil so great and so difficult to remedy, that if all his other public acts had been perfectly wise and right, this single feature of his administration would suffice to render it deplorable." Later in the 19th century, legislation would create the tenured civil service to prevent wholesale partisan removals of the kind Jackson practiced, and more meritorious kinds of removals as well.

Writing at a time when Jackson's memory was still vivid, Parton took account of Old Hickory's "invincible popularity" with multitudes of Americans, particularly Democrats. "What we lovingly admire," Parton declared, "that, to some extent, we are." He concluded that Jackson—military leader, frontier Indian fighter, and self-described champion of the common man—was the "representative man" of what he termed "the combative-rebellious period of American history." Parton's choice of words implied an expectation that America would evolve away from an identification with Andrew Jackson. Nevertheless, Jackson's political admirers have contrived

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to keep his image before us, even as we move away from his times. (How they have done so is worth investigating.)

Land of Frontiersmen

In the closing decade of the 19th century, Frederick Jackson Turner announced his famous thesis on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Turner claimed that the western frontier of white settlement had been the primary determinant of American history down to his own time, although with the closing of that frontier he foresaw that a new kind of America would emerge. American character, according to him, had been shaped both by the ability of people to escape from the East coast to the frontier and by the experience of life on the frontier. He described frontier life as individualistic, strong, inquisitive, acquisitive, pragmatic, and optimistic. Andrew Jackson could plausibly be taken to personify the American as Turner conceived of him. Turner's famous thesis laid the foundation for a vision of "Jacksonian America" as a land of self-made frontiersmen—ignoring such other inhabitants as women, blacks, Indians, Hispanics, city-dwellers, sailors, investors, college professors, social reformers, factory workers, recent immigrants, and members of the Whig, Antimasonic, and "Know-Nothing" parties—many of whom actually opposed Jackson politically. Turner's thesis, like many other historical generalizations, contained much truth but did not comprehend the whole truth.

Turner himself wrote comparatively little, but his outlook achieved wide currency and influenced the brief but powerful portrait of Andrew Jackson in the English professor Vernon Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927). The Turner-Parrington interpretation of Jackson was nowhere more fully exemplified than in the two-volume *The Life of Andrew Jackson* by Marquis James, which won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1938. James wrote beautifully and made extensive use of primary sources. He sympathized more with Jackson than Parton had. Though he minimized the number of federal office-holders Old Hickory had replaced, still he judged that Jackson left the public service "a great deal worse than he found it." Significantly, James cast Jackson as a defender of the people against the cabal of capitalists who ran the national bank. He celebrated Jackson's stand against South Carolina's attempted nullification and portrayed his advocacy of "Indian Removal" (the expulsion of Native Americans from east of the Mississippi to Oklahoma and Kansas) as the best the Indians could hope for.

Seemingly, James had defined a version of Jackson for the New Deal generation. But things did not turn out that way. James was a professional writer (like Parton), not an academic. He went on to take commissions to write official biographies of businessmen and official histories of business corporations. Although these books sold well, they evidently cost James credibility with the liberal intelligentsia. His biography of Jackson disappeared from their canon.

The Court Historian

Replacing James's biography in liberals' affections soon appeared another Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Age of Jackson* (1945), by a 28-year-old prodigy, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., son and namesake of a Harvard professor who had also been a liberal icon. As its title indicated, this book offered a sweeping intellectual and political portrait of America from the 1820s through the 1840s, emphasizing parallels with the New Deal. Jackson's personal biography was of interest only insofar as it related to public policy; indeed Schlesinger reproached a historian named Thomas Abernathy for paying too much attention to Jackson's early life in his entry on Jackson for the *Dictionary of American Biography*. Schlesinger created "Jacksonian America" anew.

Explicitly breaking with Turner's emphasis on the western frontier as the origin of American democracy, Schlesinger promoted a Jacksonian Democracy that was primarily an expression of eastern workingmen's resentments. Taking some of Jackson's class-conflict rhetoric with new seriousness, Schlesinger declared that Old Hickory's "war" on the national bank rallied eastern workers against the changes being promoted by capitalism. Industrialization was rendering their artisan skills obsolete and reducing once-proud craftsmen to the status of assembly-line wage earners. Jackson's chosen successor in the White House, Martin Van Buren of New York, exemplified for Schlesinger the climax of the transformation of the old agrarian republicanism of Jefferson into a modern working-class democracy (or rather, Democracy, for the antebellum Democratic Party called itself "the Democracy" with a capital "D.")

Schlesinger took his refusal to acknowledge the role of the frontier to such an extreme that he never even mentioned Indian Removal, the number one item on the agenda of Jackson's first term in office. In a single allusion to the Supreme Court decision in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) that vindicated the Cherokee Nation's treaty right to refuse removal—a decision that President Jackson famously felt free to ignore—Schlesinger simply calls it "the case of the Georgia missionaries." An unwary reader would have no inkling of all that the case involved. Indian Removal was by no means overlooked by historians at this time; Marquis James had recently treated the subject. Similarly, Schlesinger also ignored Jackson's personal slaveholding, public support for slavery, and attempts to ban criticism of slavery from circulating through the mails. Schlesinger preferred to avoid any topic that might cast doubt on his characterization of Jackson as an appropriate hero for New Deal liberals. His work on Jackson became the first of a long series of volumes that established him as the more or less official historian of the Democratic Party.

No Coonskin Democrat

Schlesinger's interpretation of Jackson and the Jacksonian movement as foreshadowing the New Deal provoked criticism very quickly, and from a variety of sources. In *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948), Richard Hofstadter pointed out that Jackson was no simple "coonskin" frontier democrat, but a self-made planter aristocrat with "the habit of command." (This was precisely the point Abernathy had been making in his account of Jackson's pre-presidential career that irritated Schlesinger.) Jackson campaigned for president as a military hero, not on economic issues; his election in 1828 was "more a result than a cause of the rise of democracy." Although Jackson's attack on the Bank of the United States might seem similar to FDR's denunciations of Wall Street, Hofstadter emphasized the difference between them: Jackson wanted to free the economy from the national bank's central control, not impose federal control. And Jackson, unlike Roosevelt, wanted to keep the federal government from building roads, bridges, and canals across the Union.

The next major critique of Schlesinger dealt at length with the so-called Bank War and came direct from a scholarly banker: Bray Hammond, a member of the Federal Reserve Board from 1944 to 1950. Hammond's *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1958. It showed how the Second Bank of the United States, modeled on Alexander Hamilton's original one, had served a useful purpose. Hammond argued that the bank's president, Nicholas Biddle, had behaved responsibly and honorably, and that Jackson's destruction of the national bank had left the country prey to violent swings of the business cycle until the present Federal Reserve System was created in 1913.

The 1950s witnessed the publication of two more books about Jackson that have stood the test of time remarkably well. John William Ward's *Andrew Jackson, Symbol for an Age* (1953)

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Works discussed in this essay:

Life of Andrew Jackson, by James Parton. 3 volumes. Kessinger Publishing Company, 2,076 pages, $195 (cloth)

"The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays*, by Frederick Jackson Turner, with commentary by John Mack Faragher. Yale University Press, 276 pages, $22

Main Currents in American Thought, by Vernon L. Parrington. 2 volumes. University of Oklahoma Press, 906 pages, $59.90 (paper)

The Life of Andrew Jackson, by Marquis James. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 972 pages, out of print

The Age of Jackson, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Little, Brown & Company, 577 Pages, $24.95 (paper)

The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It, by Richard Hofstadter. Doubleday, 519 pages, $15.95 (paper)

Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War, by Bray Hammond. Princeton University Press. 784 pages. $60 (paper)

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The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief, by Marvin Meyers. American Council of Learned Societies, 248 pages, $36 (cloth), $24 (paper)

Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian, by Michael Paul Rogin. Transaction Publishers, 373 pages, $24.95 (paper)

Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication, by James Curtis. Longman, 194 pages, $20 (paper)

The Passions of Andrew Jackson, by Andrew Burstein. Alfred A. Knopf, 320 pages, $15 (paper)

The Presidency of Andrew Jackson, by Richard Latner. University of Georgia Press, 291 pages, out of print

The Presidency of Andrew Jackson, by Donald Cole. University Press of Kansas, 352 pages, $16.95 (paper)

Andrew Jackson, by Robert Remini. HarperCollins, 272 pages, $14 (paper)

Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times, by H. W. Brands. Random House, 656 pages, $35 (cloth), $16.95 (paper)

Andrew Jackson, by Sean Wilentz. Times Books, 224 pages, $22 (cloth)

The Rise of American Democracy, by Sean Wilentz. W.W. Norton & Company, 992 pages, $35 (cloth), $19.95 (paper)

American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House, by Jon Meacham. Random House, 512 pages, $30 (cloth), $17 (paper)

Andrew Jackson: Good, Evil, and the Presidency. Written and produced by Carl Byker. Directed by Carl Byker and Mitch Wilson. Red Hill Productions and KCET.

treated not the man himself but the associations he conjured up to his contemporaries: a successful frontier farmer, the hero of New Orleans, a man of iron will, an agent of providence, the natural man whose vigor contrasted with the effete intellectual (allegedly John Quincy Adams). Added together, these various symbols go far to explain the power of Jackson's appeal in the young American republic. But while it captured well Old Hickory's significance to his admirers, Ward's book neglected Jackson's symbolic meaning to his adversaries: a man governed by passion rather than reason, a demagogue, a tyrant trampling on the Constitution and the laws. Ward portrays a nation with a great deal more cultural and political unity than the American Union in fact had in the antebellum era.

A fitting companion to Ward's book is Marvin Meyers's *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (1957). Like Ward, Meyers followed the general trend in the American history profession away from political history and toward the history of broader cultural and social trends. His subject matter was attitudes and feelings rather than reality or actions. "No man of his time was at once so widely loved and so deeply hated" as Jackson, acknowledged Meyers, and he set out to learn why. The United States during Jackson's lifetime was evolving from an agricultural into a commercial nation, Meyers observed. Some Americans welcomed this change and urged government actions to facilitate economic development and diversification. These optimists became Whigs, supporters of the national bank, advocates of federal government aid to transportation and education, and opponents of Andrew Jackson. Other Americans, however, nursed misgivings about such changes, even though they might actually profit from them. They recalled Jeffersonian agrarianism with nostalgia and worried about the emergence of a class society. They focused their fears on the "monster" national bank—which they termed an unnatural, artificial institution for enriching the few at the expense of the many—and looked to Jackson to save the country from the bank. Meyers saw the Jacksonian "persuasion" not as innovative but as fearful or at best ambivalent about economic progress. This, he demonstrated, was the theme of Jackson's famous message in which he vetoed the re-charter of the national bank. By contrast, the Whigs spoke to America's hopes for the future and faith in economic enterprise. It seems relevant to point out that the Whigs took their name from the British political party that resisted executive usurpation and represented the freedom-loving, forward-looking middle class.

Modern Interpretations

In 1975 Michael Paul Rogin's *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* startled readers. A highly speculative contemplation of Jackson's personality, this book proved a precursor of two quite different historiographical trends. In the first place it commenced a renewed examination of Jackson's psychology, for it was followed by both James Curtis's *Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication* (1976) and Andrew Burstein's *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (2003). One

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may justly wonder to what extent it is possible to psychoanalyze the dead, but the outcome of these studies would seem to confirm Jackson's contemporary opponents' estimate that he was militantly self-righteous, obsessed with vindicating his honor, and able to falsify his memory of events. Second and more importantly, Rogin's book called attention to the neglected subject of Jackson's Indian policy. In the 34 years since, the field of American Indian history has developed enormously, employing ethnographic as well as traditional methods. "Indian Removal" has been placed in a whole new context, the history of the Native American peoples themselves. In addition, political histories of Jackson's administration, like Richard Latner's *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (1979) and Donald Cole's *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (1993), have given large consideration to this 19th-century undertaking, over which the 21st century feels shame.

By far the most thorough examination completed to date is Robert Remini's three-volume biography, *Andrew Jackson* (1977–1984). A forthright admirer of his subject, Remini is laudatory is his assessments of Jackson's achievements. At the same time, he is also a meticulous scholar who does not allow his prejudices to get in the way of the evidence he finds. For example, in 1790 young Jackson set up housekeeping with another man's wife, Rachel Donelson Robards. Rachel's husband eventually divorced her. Andrew and Rachel, after learning of the divorce, underwent a marriage ceremony in 1794. During the presidential campaign between Jackson and John Quincy Adams of 1828, an Adams newspaper unearthed the old scandal that Rachel and Andrew had "lived in sin" together for several years. Jackson's campaign headquarters responded that they had participated in a marriage ceremony in 1791 under the mistaken belief that a divorce had already been issued. Remini, scrupulously investigating, concluded that no such 1791 ceremony took place, and the story that it had was an elaborately orchestrated lie. Still, whatever evidence of duplicity or ruthlessness Remini uncovers, he remains firm in his overall judgment that Jackson was a very great and noble American hero. In more recent years he has continued to defend Jackson's policy of Indian Removal as a rescue of the natives from aggressive white settlers. By expelling them from their homelands, "[h]e saved the Five Civilized Nations from probable extinction." Remini has also minimized the importance of a document from 1789, which scholars unearthed in 1995, in which a young Andrew Jackson pledged his loyalty to the King of Spain!

National Hero?

After Remini it took quite a while before another major Jackson biography materialized. Although New Deal liberals had generally found Jackson (as portrayed by Schlesinger) a congenial hero, a tribune of the common man, liberals of the 1960s and after found it harder to overlook his slaveholding and his Indian wars. Then in 2005 two new biographies appeared. The prolific H.W. Brands of the University of Texas undertook to change Jackson from a liberal hero into a national one. He devoted over half of his biography, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times* (2005), to the pre-presidential years and emphasized Jackson as soldier. While not blind to Jackson's shortcomings, Brands credits the Old Hero with concern for national security. Jackson achieved U.S. dominance over the North American continent by fighting British, Spanish, and Indians. To a considerable extent Brands returns to Turner's frontier thesis. Jackson leads hardy western pioneers against snobbish easterners like John Quincy Adams. (Brands plays down Adams's nationalism and his support for Jackson's invasion of Florida.) In Brands's hands, Jackson still defends the common man, but he is no class warrior.

Abraham Lincoln
A Life
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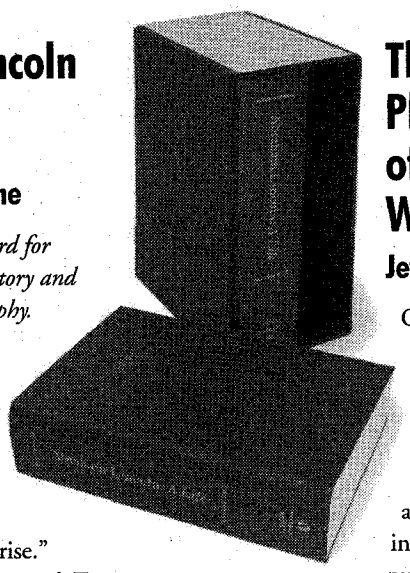

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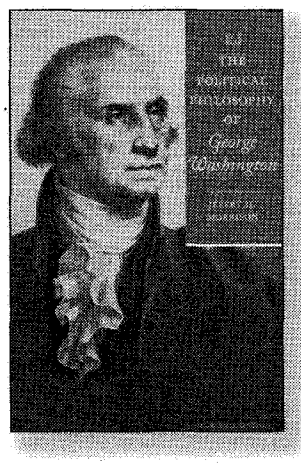
Jeffry H. Morrison



George Washington is revered as the father of his country, a clever and skilled general, and a man of restrained principle—but not as a political thinker. This short introduction to Washington's political philosophy reveals him as a thoughtful public intellectual who was well equipped to lead the young United States.

Though Washington left little explicit writing on political philosophy, Jeffry Morrison examines his key writings, actions, education, and political and professional lives. He finds that Washington held closely to a trinity of foundational principles—classical republicanism, British liberalism, and Protestant Christianity—with greater fidelity than many of the other founding fathers.

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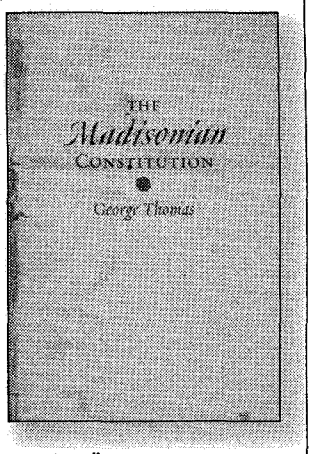

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—James R. Stoner Jr., Louisiana State University

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—Gary Jeffrey Jacobsohn, University of Texas at Austin

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The other 2005 biography came from the Princeton professor Sean Wilentz, as part of the Times Books series of presidential biographies edited by Arthur Schlesinger. It was a much shorter biography than Brands's, but it arrived on the heels of Wilentz's massive political history, *The Rise of American Democracy* (2005). In both books, Wilentz re-states Schlesinger's thesis. He fully acknowledges changing liberal priorities and Jackson's ambiguous status in current American opinion, both popular and scholarly. Nevertheless he is determined to restore Jackson's image as a liberal hero. "Jackson aligned himself, in his own mind and those of his supporters, with the forces of movement rather than of order, on the side of egalitarianism and against privilege," writes Wilentz. Well, maybe in his own mind and those of his supporters, but not in the minds of the abolitionists whose mailings Jackson ordered his Post Office to censor, nor in the minds of stout Yankee commercial farmers or of enterprising traders who wanted the sound currency provided by the national bank. Not in the minds of the Native Americans and their Evangelical white allies, nor in the minds of the free black men who, wherever they were permitted the suffrage, voted solidly against Jackson.

In his book on American democracy, Wilentz is at pains to portray Abraham Lincoln as the heir of Andrew Jackson, notwithstanding the overwhelming fact that Lincoln opposed the party of Jackson vigorously throughout his adult life. The only part of Jackson's statecraft that Lincoln admired was his refusal to allow South Carolina to "nullify" the federal tariff laws in 1832–33—and in that, Lincoln was joined by his fellow Whigs, Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. Furthermore, Jackson had elevated his friend and kitchen-cabinet member, Roger Taney, to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Taney was true to Jackson's states-rights and pro-slavery bias. Lincoln had serious doubts about the man who put the author of the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) decision on the Supreme Court. Wilentz imitates Schlesinger in life as well as art, becoming a public intellectual of the present-day Democratic Party even as he writes about Jackson.

The newest significant book on Andrew Jackson is *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (2008) by *Newsweek* editor Jon Meacham. In his study of Jackson's presidency, Meacham negotiates his way carefully among the pitfalls of Jackson's now-discredited public policies. The expulsion of the Indians from lands guaranteed by treaty was wrong, of course, but Meacham deftly observes that Jackson probably believed his own explanation that "Removal" placed the natives out of harm's way. Censoring the mail to prevent criticism of slavery is excused on the grounds that Jackson was just being a politician. Destroying the central bank was not in the national interest, but Jackson could not brook interference with his will. And, in the last analysis, for Meacham, Jackson's strength of will is what makes him, for all his faults, a great president, a liberal hero, and a great American. James Parton's hope that the American people would outgrow admiration for Jackson's combative nature has yet to be realized. However, Meacham, like Marquis James, dwells upon Jackson's softer qualities in relating incidents from his domestic life.

Conflicted Images

A RECENT TELEVISION PROGRAM AIRED ON PBS, *Andrew Jackson: Good, Evil, and the Presidency* illustrates the present ambiguity regarding Jackson's image. Jackson's wrongs against African-Americans and Native Americans are admitted and deplored. The authorities interviewed give conflicting estimates of his other policies. The program offers no new synthesis. Meanwhile, it consistently identifies Jackson's white adversaries as "the Washington establishment," and portrays his opponent Henry Clay (a gregarious, poker-playing Kentuckian) with an inauthentic British, prissy accent. Evangelical Christianity, a prominent force in the politics of Jackson's time, is ignored completely. One would never guess from the program that most white abolitionists were Christians, or that many Cherokees were too. At the end, Harry Watson, professor and director for the Center of the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, argues that although blacks, Indians, and women remained outside Jackson's own democratic vision, yet when they rose to defend their rights, they were embracing "Jacksonian Democracy." More logically, they could be seen as embracing democracy as defined by John Quincy Adams, who actually included them in the defense of natural rights he made repeatedly in July 4th orations, in his fight against the congressional gag rule, and in his once-famous speech celebrating the Jubilee of the Constitution in 1839.

Andrew Jackson was an important and influential president, and needs to be understood if we are to understand the America of his time. But is Andrew Jackson really suitable for us as a *hero* any longer? Today, Americans of all political persuasions deplore white supremacy, accept the need for a central bank, and recognize the convenience of paper currency. The spoils system Jackson practiced has long since been reformed by the creation of a civil service. Yet Old Hickory has so captured the imagination—at least of partisan Democrats—that he keeps being reborn. Should he now be taken over by conservatives as *their* hero? Jackson's strong concern for national security and honor might seem to make him a plausible candidate. But conservatives would be ill advised to shoulder the burdens of Jackson's racism, hatred of banks and bankers, demagogic class warfare, and impatience with legal restraints.

A much more suitable conservative hero would be Jackson's longtime adversary John Quincy Adams, who was just as strong a nationalist and had a wiser vision for economic policy. That, however, is another story.

Daniel Walker Howe is the Rhodes Professor of American History Emeritus at Oxford University and professor of history emeritus at UCLA. He is the author most recently of the Pulitzer Prize-winning What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848 *(Oxford University Press).*

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Book Review by Joseph Tartakovsky

Dead End

Nothing to Be Frightened Of, by Julian Barnes.
Alfred A. Knopf, 256 pages, $24.95

Freud believed it impossible to imagine your own death. If you picture your own funeral, it's you, after all, who observes it. Julian Barnes imagines his imagination deserves more credit. "For most of my sentient life I've known the vivid dread," he writes, "and also felt fully able…to imagine my own eternal non existence." This has not brought philosophic calm. "People say of death, 'There's nothing to be frightened of,'" he recorded in his diary, decades ago. He didn't believe it then, and now, at age 62, night terrors leave him "pitchforked back into consciousness," beating his pillow and wailing in horror "Oh no Oh No OH NO!"

Barnes has won the Somerset Maugham Award, the E.M. Forster Award, the Prix Médicis, the Shakespeare Prize, the Austrian State Prize for European Literature, and was named a *Chevalier*, then an *Officier*, and finally a *Commandeur* of France's Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He is a regular *New Yorker* contributor and a central figure in modern British literature. His new book was named by the *New York Times* as one of the year's Ten Best. Michael Dirda in the *Washington Post* called it "[b]eautifully done." Richard Eder in the *Boston Globe* spoke of the author's "humane irony." And Garrison Keillor in the *New York Times Book Review* confessed: "It is a beautiful and funny book, still booming in my head." Suffice it to say, the mandarins of contemporary culture think this book and its author are keepers. If laurel wreaths were still in fashion, Barnes would be crowned with a forest.

Nothing to Be Frightened Of is an unusual book. It is partly a memoir of the author's family, partly a reflection on death and inseparable perplexities like religion, memory, and the purpose of life. Unorganized and chapterless, it reads like a long essay. Barnes's working thesis is that death exists, not God; that life is haphazard and the will isn't free; that one struggles in vain to find transcendence in life or consolation in death. It's as dreary as it sounds, though alleviated somewhat by Barnes's stylish, unpreachy prose. As the author of ten novels and collected essays and stories, Barnes's thought naturally turns to his—and every novelist's—bid for immortality. He thinks he may enjoy a generation or two of readers, if lucky, but literary work is "really just scratching on the wall of the condemned cell. We do it to say: I was here too." Later in the book we learn that even this is expecting too much: "At some point between now and the six-billion-years-away death of the planet," he writes, in one of his frequent appeals to natural science, "every writer will have his or her last reader." Some see the glass half full, some half empty; some see the glass and its contents decaying into carbon dust.

The autobiographical passages consist mainly of scenelets featuring his parents' aging and death. They are remarkable for their icy detachment. Here, for instance, is Barnes viewing his mother at the undertaker's: "I touched her cheek several times, then kissed her at the hairline. Was she that cold because she'd been in the freezer, or because the dead are naturally so cold?" So with his grandmother's senility, his mother's dementia, his father's stroke-induced incapacitation, old photo albums, funerals, cremations—none of these seem to provoke even the faintest lingering tenderness. He recounts exchanges with his brother Jonathan, a retired professor of Greek philosophy in Geneva and an eccentric who wishes to be buried in his garden nearby the half-dozen llamas in his possession. At one point the stoic brother-philosopher, who serves as a foil to his brother-novelist, calls the fear of death "irrational." "It's the most rational thing in the world," Julian responds. "[H]ow can reason not reasonably detest and fear the end of reason?"

Death, of course, is not the end of reason in the biblical (or Platonic) traditions. Barnes, however, comes from a household in which his father only consulted the Bible in solving crossword puzzles; his mother apparently took up the "mumbo-jumbo" even less frequently. Still, time's winged chariot, which we hear but never

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see, hurries near. The half-hearted dismissal of God in his youth has become, in his 50s and 60s, a half-hearted dismissal of his half-hearted dismissal, which by my calculation leaves him a quarter-hearted agnostic. One evening at the dinner of a writers' club, the seven members call a referendum on the possibility of an afterlife. All deny it, save for the wavering Catholic. (Another calls it a "cruel con" but adds that he "wouldn't mind if it were true.") They would have mocked the Catholic once, says Barnes, but "now there is a sense that the rest of us are much closer to the oblivion in which we believe, whereas he, at least, has a moderate, modest hope of salvation and Heaven. It seems to me...that we quietly envy him." Thus, characteristically, Barnes tries simultaneously to give himself consolatory credit for an emotion and for the unflinching realism that strips it of meaning.

The only certainty is Death, which, unlike God, doesn't "pretend to be Vengeful or Merciful, or even Infinitely Merciless...death never lets you down, remains on call seven days a week, and is happy to work three consecutive eight-hour shifts." Grim business to be sure, says Barnes, but consider the alternative: immortality. Life everlasting, he observes, in a passage typical of his manner of proceeding, would be one long stretch of excruciating tedium; moreover, the pain of life makes death a blessing; finally, human beings, such as they are, hardly deserve eternal perpetuation. Naturally the authorities can make exceptions ("Shakespeare, Mozart, Aristotle, over there, behind the velvet rope, the rest of you down this trapdoor"). But for the rest of us, for Barnes's readers—*you*, as he often addresses us—life is, in Henry James's phrase, a mere "predicament before death." Barnes finds death-haunted Russians congenial ("I think that if people began thinking about death sooner," said Shostakovich, "they'd make fewer foolish mistakes." But mostly he owes his penchant for paradox and frigid cynicism to a coterie of 19th-century French writers: Zola, Daudet, Flaubert, Stendhal, the brothers Goncourt, and above all Jules Renard (1864–1910), who, after witnessing the deaths of his father by shotgun suicide and mother by drowning in a well, seems to have specialized in the God-related epigram: "I don't know if God exists, but it would be better for His reputation if He didn't." "God does not believe in our God." "Yes, God exists, but He knows no more about it than we do." (The first line of Barnes's book is an attempt at this art: "I don't believe in God, but I miss Him.")

Barnes's own story is vague and disjunct—few dates, little chronology, friends identified only by letters. He insists on repeating, pages apart, particular phrases and factual tidbits, a sort of cross-referencing that seems calculated to reflect the flightiness of memory. Or maybe he wants his readers to know that he doesn't care about being careless. A closing page reveals an error made on his opening one—his grandfather was christened Bertie, not Bert, as he had claimed—yet he feels no need to amend the first sentence and spare us the correction. After a paragraph on the need to embrace oblivion, Barnes shrugs: "Such wintry wisdom may briefly convince. I almost persuaded myself for the time I was writing the paragraph above." The expectation, page after page, that any sentence is liable to be recast or disavowed by a subsequent one becomes tiresome, but it does effectively convey Barnes's own irresolution. Like a man unable to sleep, he moves restively from topic to topic, a childhood memory sparking a literary reflection, or such a reflection causing an old memory to resurface. In his chatty informality he peppers the reader with questions, as if he required our help in thinking a matter through ("Would you rather be conscious of your dying, or unconscious of it?"). At times he tries to force the reader to share his anxious cast of thought:

> I may be dead by the time you are reading this sentence. In which case, any complaints about the book will not be answered. On the other hand, we may both be alive now (you by definition so), but you could die before me. Had you thought of that? Sorry to bring it up, but it is a possibility, at least for a few more years. In which case, my condolences to your nearest and dearest.

Such waggery just barely rescues the book from morbidness, but it does not relieve the tone of disenchantment. Not first-hand disenchantment—Barnes is disenchanted with being disenchanted, and disenchanted with being disenchanted with being disenchanted, etc., etc. This is a tedious pose. Bored to death by an irony they don't know how to relinquish, our prize-winners try to express some kind, any kind, of sincerity, even if only as a joke.

This is why the book, despite its supposedly terrifying subject, does not terrify. On one hand there is the eerie emotional frost that encrusts the portrait of his family, which does nothing to excite human sympathy. Then there is the relentless scientific austerity. Beyond literary figures, Barnes's taste turns to men of science. He favors evolutionary biologists (especially Richard Dawkins) who teach, in his words, that behavior is governed by a "plait of genetic material," that "we are a mere sequence of brain events," and the soul a "story the brain tells itself." When human life is anatomized as a mere mass of DNA and cerebral flickerings, when the long view means brooding on the planet's frozen future, one's fate in the universe loses its personal consequence. So does the book. With no instruction to impart, no ethic to guide us, *Nothing to be Frightened Of* is inconclusive, as it must be, but also joyless, which it need not. Barnes is a talented writer sharing his confusions about life's fixed mysteries. This is an honest position, but not one that satisfies. Not even for the author: "I can't claim that confronting death (no, that sounds too active, too pretend-heroic—the passive mode is better: I can't claim that being confronted by death) has given me any greater accommodation with it, let alone made me wiser, or more serious, or more... anything really." Barnes gives us a book about nothingness, and concludes that he has nothing of interest to say about the subject.

Joseph Tartakovsky is a contributing editor of the Claremont Review of Books.

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PARTHIAN SHOT
by Mark Helprin

First, Do No Harm

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN WHAT IS POSSIBLE IN MODERN MEDICINE and what is affordable grows sharper by the year, and has uselessly stressed the question of health care into a problem of redistributive equity. Whether by the cruelty of fact in a market economy or the cruelty of fiat in a socialist system, medical care will be rationed one way or another. The poor and the aged already have socialized medicine. Changing the method of payment for the rest of the population will have little substantive effect other than to introduce economies of scale offset by bureaucratic gigantisms. The best response to the crisis lies in reducing costs.

The most obvious means of lowering the prices of medical "goods"—doctors, hospitals, auxiliary personnel, machines, drugs, etc.—is to increase their supply. Some hold that in medicine this fundamental law of economics is inoperative, or that, mysteriously, supply simply cannot be increased. They are wrong.

In comparison with the United States, Japan and the major countries of Western Europe other than Britain have on average 150% more physicians and 200% more hospital beds per capita. Care and outcomes in these physician-hospitalization-intense environments are roughly similar to our own. In fact, the average life expectancy of 12 such representative countries is 80.2 years as opposed to America's 78.5. And yet we spend 16% of GDP on health, 63% more than their 9.4%.

Britain and Canada, like us apparently following an Anglo-Saxon model, have similar physician and hospital-bed ratios, and yet spend far less, 10% of GDP, than we do. Canada's cost efficiencies and somewhat greater life expectancy are due to the absence of a *Lumpenproletariat* and to the suppression of individual choice: i.e., sorry, Grandma's got to die now. When it comes to such decisions we must be absolutely sure that in the reform of our own systems bureaucracy is excluded.

Independent of the austerity of decree in socialized medicine and the austerity of unaffordability in our half-socialized system is a model of cost efficiency based on the richer presence of things that are correlated with healing and yet have foolishly been made scarce. In the period 1970–1990, the granting of American medical degrees increased by 81%. In 1990–2004, as the population grew by 18%, the granting of medical degrees declined by 5%. Though looting physicians from third-world countries that desperately need them has slightly increased the ratio of physicians per capita, it is still much lower than in most advanced countries.

To increase the supply of medical "goods,"—for example, doubling in ten years the number of medical graduates and hospital beds—the government, which spends almost $1 trillion annually on the socialized portion of the American health care system and is projected to spend more than twice that by 2016, can reschedule a portion of its payments so as over time to double the enrollments of medical and nursing schools, educate medical professionals without debt, build and expand hospitals and research institutions, and increase expenditures on public health and prevention (which, especially for chronically unhealthy segments of the population, are more valuable and cost-effective than just picking up the pieces).

The resources for this can be drawn from spending in areas that do not pertain to matters of life or death; from targeted tax increases in times of economic expansion (so you won't have to lie on a gurney in the hall as you expire from cirrhosis, you might have to pay more for your gin); from the issuance of federal and state health bonds; and by wringing out criminal and institutionalized fraud, lunatic inefficiencies, and excessive bureaucratization. My mother's flimsy, hospital-style bed, which she used at home before she died, and which could not have cost more than $300 to manufacture, was for years billed to Medicare at $2,160 per annum. With appropriate resolution, this kind of shameful gouging, which leads to medical and hospitalization charges that make you think you're on LSD, can easily be crushed. No senator would be as popular as the one who threw the lobbyists from the temple and focused the ire of his investigative committee upon the ten thousand varieties of this continuing outrage.

Further to promote the abundance that can drive down costs (or at least keep them stable as care intensifies), favored tax treatment can lure private capital into the health sector on a massive scale and channel it to remedy deficiencies: for example, by yoking tax abatements to high-quality hospitals in under-served areas or for under-served populations or illnesses. This, and increasing the tax advantage of directing philanthropy to medical institutions and facilities, are the best and least compulsory means of moving the necessary proportion of our unprecedented national wealth away from non-essentials to the preservation and protection of lives and health.

A SOCIETY WITHOUT THE STRENGTH OR SENSE TO ELEVATE MATTERS OF mortality and human suffering above those of material wealth or whim will suffer until its conflicting desires are forcibly reconciled by suffering it can no longer bear. The American health care system long ago jumped the rails, and arguing one theoretical preference or another is useless while what has evolved continues without restraint to grow as a hybrid.

Though they have great potential for improving health care, the steps outlined above would commit us neither to experimenting with the inadequacies of socialized medicine nor to holding fast to the failures of what we now have. Quite apart from its recent unprecedented interventions and expenditures, the government has for a long time wielded a massive and blunt instrument supporting an unsatisfactory state of affairs. Rather than inducing collapse or further atrophy by simply withdrawing or advancing its involvement, it could with its customary weight alone transform the health care system according to rational principles. As for political impediments and the power of special interests, with the proper posing of the question to the public, these could be blown away like the most fragile leaf in the most violent wind.

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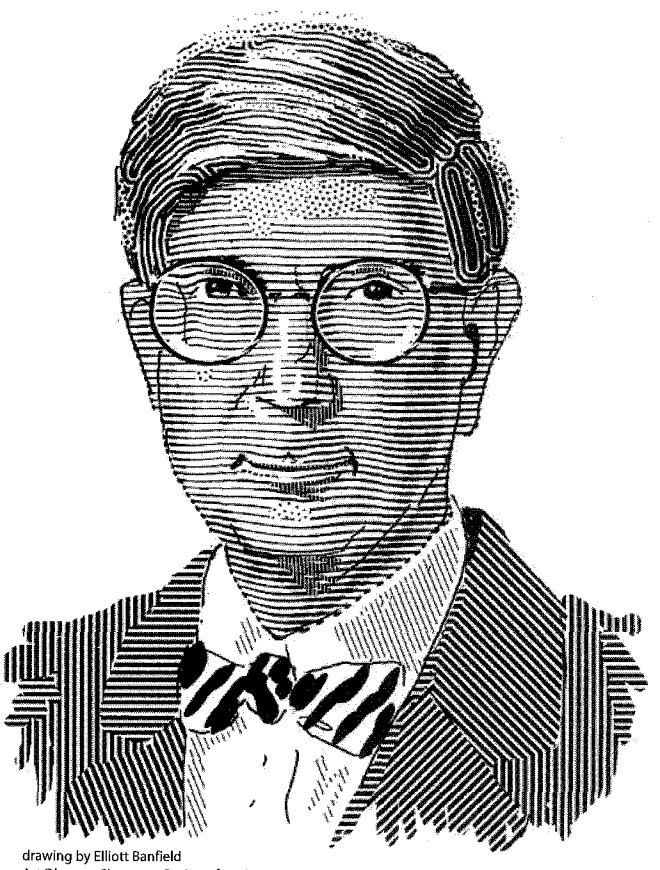

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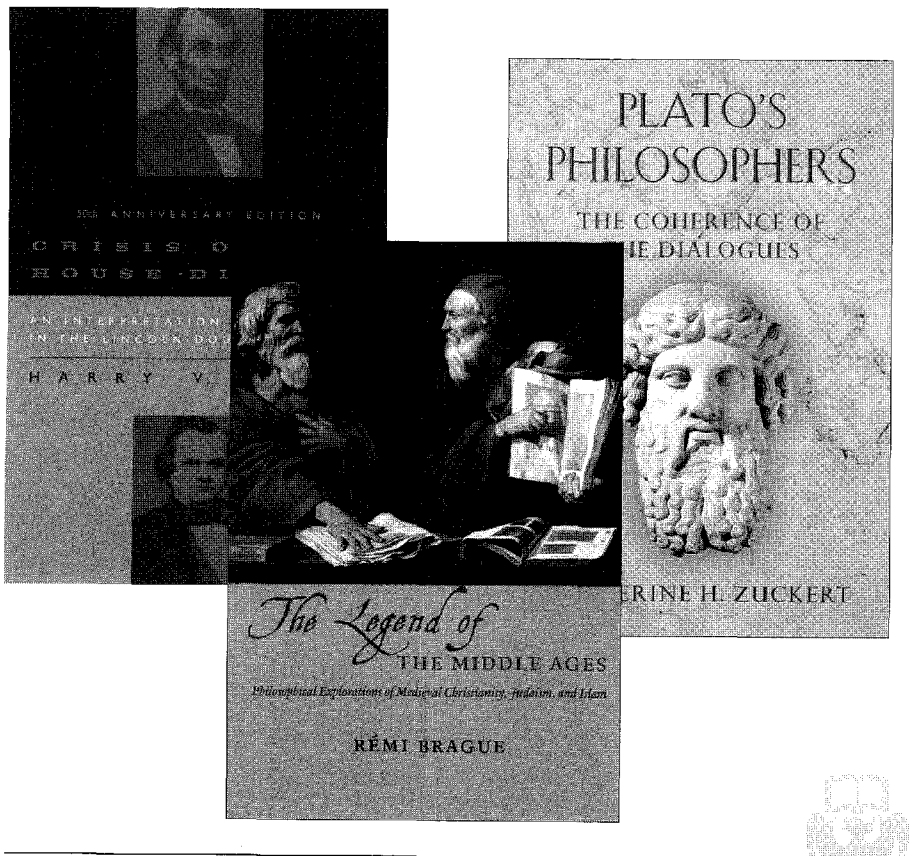

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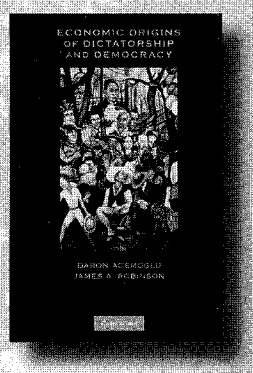

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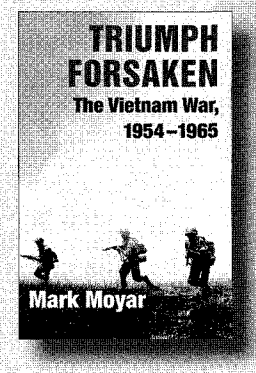

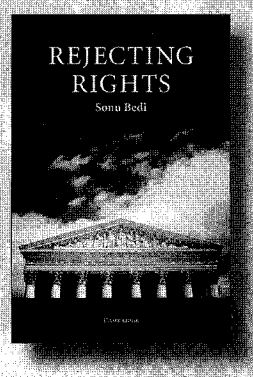

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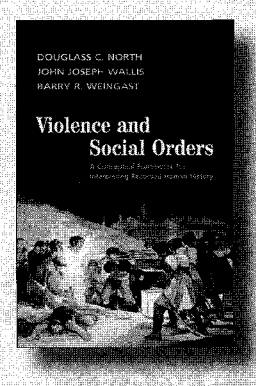

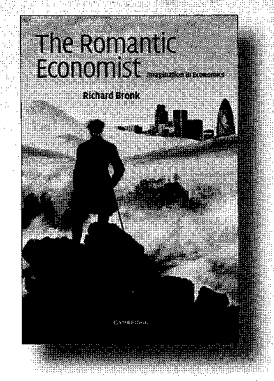

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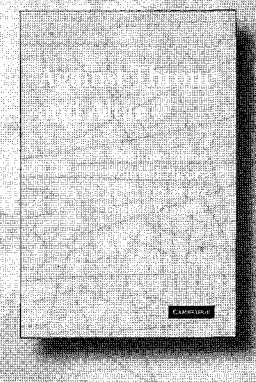

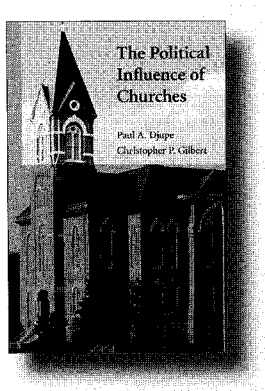

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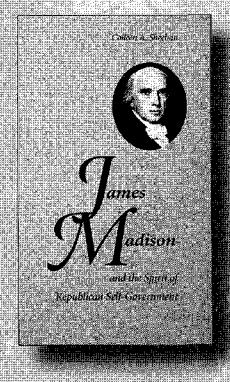

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